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LETTERS

Black and white in uniform

Your recollection in "Tilting at Windmills" [July/August] of black and white patients who became friends in an Army hospital reminded me of similar groups that I observed as a Red Cross worker in the 47th General Hospital in New Guinea during World War II. The men usually were laughing and joking and often seemed to me to be centered on the one black member of the group. I was more impressed by two men, black and white, in adjacent beds at the end of one ward, who seemed to be quietly companionable friends. They went to the mess hall and movies together and sat together reading, writing letters, and talking during the day. When the ship finally arrived to take them home I wondered at what point on the long journey across the Pacific they would drift apart, whether they would introduce each other to any relatives that might be at the dock, or if they would ever see each other again. I'll never know about them, but I did see my worst expectations realized a year or so later at the Linde Stadium Red Cross Center in Nurnberg, Germany.

On a quiet evening a white soldier casually played the piano in the lounge while I listened. A black soldier rushed up to him with a happy greeting and was brushed off so quickly that I barely had time to see his stricken expression as he left. The white guy immediately turned to me, also white, and explained that they only knew each other from having been in the same hospital recently. I replied that I had worked in hospitals and understood how friendships could develop, then walked away. Over the years I have thought of so many other things I could have said. I also have wondered how he would have behaved if I had not been there. He had a New York accent, by the way.

NANCY A. CASEY
Hadley, Massachusetts

Three-martini executives

Like many of my generation, I did basic training in the ascetic Washington "public interest" boot camps, and among my most vivid memories was my occasional trip to a fancy law firm on business when someone actually served me coffee! About twice a year, my organization had board meetings, and while they were not to be confused with Exxon board meetings, we had out-of-town trips and fancy meals. Thus, you can see why Jonathan Rowe's "How the Democrats Learned to Love the Three Martini Lunch" [June] hit a responsive chord.

The problem, unfortunately, is larger than Rowe makes it. A *Fortune* editor, railing against liberals, once posited that Tip O'Neill was responsible for "exactly" 29.7 percent of everything wrong in America, and similarly, I believe that executive (business and government) egos are responsible for exactly 46.4 percent of everything wrong in America. Business executives waste millions of dollars of stockholders' and taxpayers' money fighting battles they shouldn't, just to save face. They extinguish productivity with autocratic terrorism. They feed on inflation of inefficiency with their boutique-like ideas on executive workstyle.

CHARLES C. SHEPHERD
Washington, D.C.

In defense of turf battles

It is utterly fascinating to see a magazine that specializes in a "Who's Who" column (which does a wonderful job talking about "turf battles" and "grinding axes" in Washington) doing an expose on the reporter elites ["Reporters: The New Washington Elite," Charlotte Hays and Jonathan Rowe, July/August].

What right, exactly, does the *Monthly* claim to make it better than those reporters who seem to get used in administration "turf wars"? Yours is the magazine which most deeply covers just these things for a national readership. Please don't complain about things you apparently endorse in your regular columns.

WENDELL J. SHERK
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I found your article on "Reporters: The New Washington Elite" quite interesting to say the least, but a couple of errors should be corrected: I didn't say the *Los Angeles Times* put on a "good" Christmas party, I said it put on the "best"; we have a 45-person bureau (33 reporters and editors), not a 32-person bureau.

JACK NELSON
Washington, D.C.

(P.S.—Sorry for the delay in responding to your article, but with my busy social schedule I just haven't had much time for correspondence.)

Jack Nelson is Washington bureau chief for the Los Angeles Times.

Ignore Nicaragua

Charles Lane's review of Shirley Christian's book on Nicaragua [July/August] represents a dangerous tendency in neoliberal thinking on foreign policy issues. I don't know if the Sandinistas are truly interested in expanding civil liberties for Nicaraguans, but I do know that it is really none of my business. There is absolutely no threat to me or my family and friends deriving from Nicaragua, no "clear and present danger" to anyone or anything in America.

What then is the justification for Lane's approving use of Christian's maxim that "the United States should not allow itself to fall into the trap of having to accept, in an area closely tied to Central America, either a repressive right-wing dictatorship...or a repressive left-wing dictatorship"? Why not? Are we, to borrow a line from Bobby Kennedy, "like the God of the Old Testament that we can decide which hamlet can be destroyed" by our CIA-backed paramilitary forces simply because a government's Marxist style offends our sense of decorum?

Vietnam should have taught us that whatever its virtues, our parochial style of politics does not produce politicians who are well-equipped to deal patiently and competently with the complexities of Third World revolution. Hundreds of years of oppression and intervention, like that which has occurred in Nicaragua, becomes an issue of appearing "soft on communism." That our democracy produces leaders as ignorant of the world as Ronald Reagan ought to be evidence enough that we have little of positive value to contribute to Third World politics, even if the moral basis of our intervention were not in question.

ERIC R. ALTERMAN
New York, New York

Chavez for secretary of state?

After reading "Just One of the Guys" [Paul M. Barrett, June], I feel compelled to point out to my former associate, Linda Chavez, that there is a dicey difference between genuine transcendence of race and that of contrived assimilation.

Linda and I worked for the same teachers' union some nine years ago. So, upon comparing my memories of Linda with the article I have just read, I am dismayed though not surprised that she has fallen prey to a type of cultural buffoonery.

A few years ago, while attending an all-white Christmas party (save myself and a male business partner—we are both black), I witnessed an incredible feat. Among the writhing bodies on the dance floor stood the figure of my corporate counterpart, moving in a way that assaulted my sense of human rhythmic capability. With elbows bent, his arms spun in circles, one beat behind the beat of the tune; his torso twisted at regular intervals, though it, too, did not keep time with the music, nor was it in sync with his circling arms. As the dancing ceased he winked at me and leaned over to whisper in my ear: "It took me three years to learn how to do that."

During his tenure as a University of Maryland undergraduate, he was surrounded, it turns out, by white people. To fit in, he taught himself how to behave in a way he believed they would understand and accept. Linda's public posturing suggests this would-be choreographer may in fact have a twin soul.

Some years ago Linda confessed to me that her lifetime ambition was to become secretary of state. If this is still a cherished goal, for the sake of all of us I hope Linda Chavez learns *before* the advent of such a career objective, that solid accomplishment provides long-standing rewards, not the expedient adoption of her brand of "Step and Fetchit" behavioral extremes.

BARBARA COTTMAN-BECNEL
Hacienda Heights, California

I can understand how your impulse for damage control would necessitate a critical piece on Linda Chavez lest the administration take the moral high ground of tolerance.

A subtler, less pretty path to the same end would have been to define her as a (near) paragon of neoliberalism and claim her as one of your own. That you took the former approach is your business since it's your magazine. What prompts this letter is a far more egregious sin.

I'm sick and tired of the insidious slurs your and other enlightened journals heap upon successful women. If a woman has the right politics, she is considered a feminist hero, her picture is suitable for taping on princess's bedroom wall. If, on the other hand, the public woman (Jeane Kirkpatrick, Phyllis Schlafly, Linda Chavez) is ideologically impure, then the mud starts flying. In a million ways, rights-minded reporters suggest that she's not a real woman, her success has nothing to do with the women's movement, and she offers no role-modeling for the young. The cumulative subtext is always the same; *she is really a man in disguise.*

Washington Monthly has contributed to this literature of character assassination with the title "Just One of the Guys: Linda Chavez Makes Good."

JUDD MAGILNICK
Santa Monica, California

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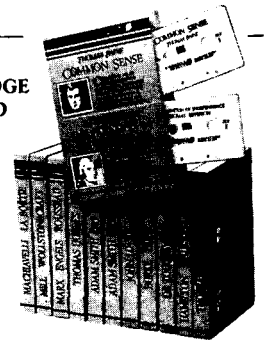

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Who pays for Amtrack?

In "Tilting at Windmills" [June] you defend Amtrak subsidies by saying you wish "we only had to subsidize the defense budget instead of paying for the whole thing." Mid-western legislators have lately been defending farm subsidies with much the same logic. The fallacy in these arguments is that transporting people by rail or providing food can be done satisfactorily in a market, but defense almost certainly cannot (neither can courts, police, roads, and a few other functions).

You and your staff point out failure after failure in seemingly every government program on the books, yet you never come to the obvious conclusion that we should cut government down to the minimum and let capitalism do its thing.

TERRY CHAMBERS
Durham, North Carolina

Between 1942 and 1962, there was a federal surtax on all interstate and rail passenger tickets. All revenues from this tax went into the general fund—there was never a trust fund for passenger rail service. If all of this revenue were put into an interest-bearing account and all federal funds spent on Amtrak were withdrawn from this account, at least $7 billion would still be in the account today.

In other words, every penny ever spent on rail passenger service by the federal government came from user fees. The federal government still owes rail passengers at least $7 billion. This makes rail passenger trains the only mode that theoretically has never used federal general funds.

The federal government built an outstanding highway and aviation network in the years following World War II with a combination of trust and general funds. Rail passenger service did not have either of these funds available (even though rail passengers were paying a "user charge") until 1971, when the government stepped in with token amounts to save a depleted system.

The federal government owes it to its citizens to provide a first-class rail passenger system. Rail passengers have paid for it. At minimum, the federal government should fund Amtrak at existing levels.

JOE CARDOZA
San Francisco, California

Testing germ weapons

Re: "Operation Bacterium: Catching Germs on the A Train" [Leonard A. Cole, July/August], I have a modest proposal.

As a retired chemist, I know the importance of controls in experiments. For future experimental aerosol dispersion of bioagents, what is needed is a good-sized sample, a closely controlled level of agent, and a stable population which is not leaving or moving around the country.

I suggest the Pentagon.

HARNEY B. PETERSON
Denver, Colorado

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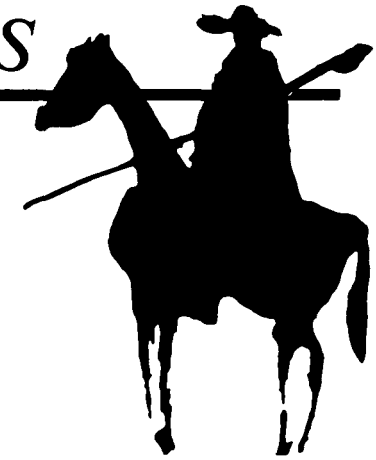
TILTING AT WINDMILLS



Have you noticed that when you deposit a check in your bank that the funds aren't available for you to draw against for ten days or so? The bank claims it takes this long for checks to "clear," or be honored by the originating bank. I worked as a messenger for a bank while I was in high school. Local checks always cleared within one day, even though I regularly stopped at the local pool hall for 20 minutes or so on the way to the clearing house. Either today's banks are conning us or their messengers are shooting an awful lot of pool....

Arthur Laffer, the California economist, is one of the great heroes of the supply-siders, who, of course, emphasize the importance of lower taxes as an incentive to growth. Their reasoning is that if people can keep more of the money they earn, they will work harder. With these thoughts in mind, ponder what Laffer recently told an interviewer:

"I've not spent my life trying to get a high income. When you're lying on your deathbed, you don't want to say that you made $10 more than someone else."...

There is something about the workings of the conventional liberal mind that can drive me to distraction. An example was a recent segment of the MacNeil-Lehrer report on how to improve education. Robert MacNeil was obviously convinced that higher pay for all teachers is the answer, so he resolutely ignored suggestions from his interviewees that there might be other approaches, like pay increases only for good teachers or allowing talented liberal arts graduates to enter public school teaching without education credits. The problem with the across-the-board increases the conventional liberal favors is that they will tend to keep bad teachers in the system when we should be trying to get them out. The increases should go to reward the good teachers who are in the system and to attract good new teachers....

Governor Cuomo has replaced Yvonne Scruggs-Leftwich, the head of New York's housing agency. Her administration was so bad that it was condemned by both landlord and tenant groups. Scruggs-Leftwich has been given a new state job at $76,000 a year, a $3,900 increase over her salary as housing commissioner. Is this an indication of how Cuomo would run Washington?...

In the recent Ghanaian spy case, it is clear that the CIA had some informers within the Ghanaian government, and the Ghanaians wanted to find out who they were. So the Ghanaian agent, Soussoudis, was assigned to pry their identities from the CIA's Sharon Scranage. My

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question is, why does the CIA need spies inside the Ghanaian government? What threat does Ghana pose to our national security? It's a small country in West Africa—the British called it the Gold Coast—with a population of only 12 million. Why should the CIA even have a mission there?...

Another foreign policy outrage took place recently in regard to Cuba. Just as the Castro government was beginning to perform an exchange agreement under which we would send back the 2,500 Marielistas who have been committing mayhem in this country and Castro would permit thousands of bona fide Cuban refugees to come here, the Reagan administration decided to put Radio Marti on the air with its daily denunciation of Castro. Wouldn't it have been prudent to hold our tongue at least long enough to rid ourselves of the murderous lunatics from Mariel?...

The agenda for the 1985 Texas State NOW conference lists 19 workshop topics, including "Consciousness Raising," "Lesbian Rights in Texas," and "Women and Images." Not one of the subjects mentions or has anything to do with children. There are many things about NOW I admire, but ignoring the importance of motherhood and children is not one of them. Nor is NOW's resolute self-righteousness about its pro-choice position on abortion. I, too, am pro-choice, but I do not understand why pro-choice supporters minimize, ignore, or suppress the moral issues involved in abortion. If they would concede that serious moral issues are involved they might begin to bridge the gap between themselves and the equally self-righteous pro-life group.

Many of them do concede this privately but seem afraid to do so in public lest it be seen as a concession by the other side. But concessions must be made if we are to end this insane debate over abortion, which both sides see as black and white but which is truly gray and which is absorbing so much passionate energy that could be more constructively directed toward other causes....

Now for our monthly item on the ethics of the bar. Operation Greylord, an undercover FBI investigation into corruption in the Cook County, Illinois court system, has resulted in the indictment of six judges and 13 lawyers. What were the fellows up to this time? The judicial transgressions included, among other things, adjusting parking tickets at a 50 percent discount and reducing or dropping drunk driving cases at $100 per case. One judge was taped as he boasted that he could make $1,000 a week fixing cases. Another told lawyers when he was assigning cases to them, "Whatever case you have in this courtroom, one-third goes to me."...

Which are the most corrupt states in America? The candidates would certainly include Illinois, as well as Louisiana, New Jersey, Nevada, Massachusetts, West Virginia, Kentucky, and Maryland. Other nominations are welcome....

The best way to cut the Pentagon budget is to eliminate weapons that don't work or that we don't need. There are enough of them—many were identified in this magazine in 1981 in an article entitled "Thirty-five Ways to Cut The Defense Budget" —that if we canceled production, we could save scores of billions that have yet to be appropriated or spent. Yet this year Congress has refused to cut one single weapons system. I asked a wise friend on the Hill why this was so. "They're afraid of making fools of themselves," he said. "The senator's nightmare is that he will be arguing on the floor against the X22 on grounds that the aluminum gizmo doesn't work and that one of his opponents will rise and say, 'Doesn't the distinguished senator know that the gizmo is actually made of titanium and that is precisely why it will work.' The nightmare ends as he sits down amidst embarrassed laughter. When he wakens, he resolves never again to take on a weapons system."...

In the debate over whether to eliminate the Social Security COLA, there was little of merit said on either side. Only Tip O'Neill had the right idea—keep the COLA but tax it. That way the poor who need the COLA will benefit but we won't be wasting money on

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the rich. Unfortunately, I did not see a single editorial praising O'Neill. If good ideas are going to go unnoticed by the press, how can public opinion be mobilized in their support?...

Did you happen to hear what Jack Germond said on "The McLaughlin Report" when asked about what had happened to Dr. Joseph Mengele? "I thought he was going to be the next panelist on this show." Germond, like the late Peter Lisagor, is finding a way to express on television a sense of humor that, again like Lisagor, he usually keeps out of his writing....

The world's fairs with which we have become familiar over the years customarily feature exhibits by various nations and business organizations. But modern political developments have added a new entrant as witnessed by this story from the *Tanzania Daily News*: "Eleven countries, 130 local firms, and three liberation movements have confirmed participation at the Ninth Dar Es Salaam International Trade Fair this year."...

Evasion of the intent of the Freedom of Information Act has become one of the higher forms of bureaucratic art. Consider the case of *The Shreveport Journal*, which for some time had been trying to get facts about Louisiana banks out of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation. As a last resort, the *Journal* filed a request under the Freedom of Information Act. When, a few weeks later, 174 pages of material arrived, the *Journal* reporters were at first exultant. Then they noticed that the names of each of the 15 banks involved had been deleted.

Next, consider the case of the Postal Rate Commission's efforts to get information from the Postal Service. The commission asked the service to give it a report that was embarrassing to the service because it revealed the service's productivity increases had not been nearly as great as claimed. The service refused to turn over the report. Then, Elliot Rock, an employee of the commission, sought the report under the Freedom of Information Act. The service claimed the report was "an internal document that it did not have to surrender." Rock appealed. This time the service said the report was not complete and therefore it did not exist.

The average citizen may wonder why the Postal Service would not want to give information to the Postal Commission in the first place. Aren't they part of the same government? Don't they all work for us? Common sense queries like these only reveal the innocence in which the average citizen dwells.

Every Washington agency is locked in mortal combat with other Washington agencies, often a whole flock of them. Take the Department of the Army. It will patriotically salute and execute any direct order of the president of the United States. Otherwise, you can pretty much count on it to lie, cheat, and evade everyone else in town, including both branches of Congress, the secretary of defense, and the president's own Office of Management and Budget....

What lead sentence can you be absolutely certain has apeared in at least 500 newspapers over the last 15 years? My nominee is:

"The company awarded [name of city]'s cable television franchise said yesterday that it cannot live up to the agreement it signed less than four months ago and asked [name of city] for substantial cutbacks in its obligations."

This was a story in *The Washington Post* about the District of Columbia's cable problems. But it has happened everywhere. Previously I have contended that the great confidence men, who in the nineteenth century sold the Brooklyn Bridge or remedies guaranteed to cure everything from whooping cough to athlete's foot, were now in consulting or academic administration. I must add cable television to the list. Its promoters promise everything to get the franchise—you like chamber music, you got it; dirty movies, ours are so hot your screen may melt—then, when the competing bidders have folded their tents and left town, they sneak back in the side door of the city council and quietly get the terms of the franchise changed so that the subscribers are lucky to end up getting half of what they had been led to expect....

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In Bellingham, Massachusetts, the summer work program for teenagers didn't happen this year. It was killed by the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees. Boris LeBlanc, president of local 747, explained to the *Middlesex News* that union members objected to the program because they believed they would be responsible for supervising the students. That objection quashed the program because, in order to get federal funds, affected unions must agree to the program.

This is an issue the unions have always been wrong about. Back in the thirties, they opposed the CCC and the WPA. In the seventies, they made CETA a joke by demanding that its jobs be meaningless make-work, which demoralized the young people who held the jobs and gave lethal ammunition to the program's critics....

We have all benefited, in terms of increased dissemination of facts about colorectal cancer, from the president's recent surgery. Among the more intriguing pieces of information to reach my attention was this from a column by Jane Brody in *The New York Times*:

"Fiber adds bulk to the stool, and among Finns stools tend to be three times larger than among New Yorkers."

While I am humbly in his debt, it is still a bit hard for me to imagine the kind of researcher who would choose this as his subject. Year after year, knocking on doors all over Helsinki, not to mention the Bronx and Staten Island, saying, "Madam, I wonder if you could help us advance the cause of science by letting us measure....".

Further notes on the impact of law on modern society: When residents of a community near Annapolis, Maryland noticed that the board of education was depositing truckloads of usable school furniture in the local dump, they expressed curiosity as to why it wasn't being given to local churches and charities instead.

The reason given by the board of education to the Annapolis *Capitol* was that if

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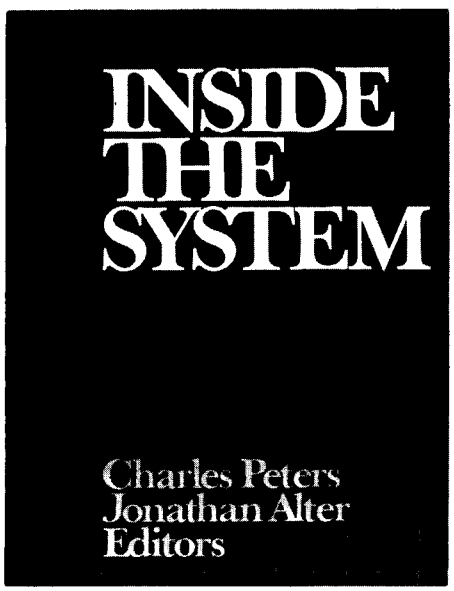

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the furniture were given away, someone might be injured by it and sue the board....

Bureaucratic sloth is usually the subject of humor in these pages. But the harm it can do is real. A State Department employee named Carole Doster was being terrorized by her violently deranged son. Fearing he might attack her at any time, she sent an urgent message to the State Department's security office on May 30, asking that her son's "dependent pass," permitting him to visit her at State without having his belongings searched, be revoked. On June 23, the pass still had not been revoked, and the son carried a gun into the building in a canvas bag and proceeded to shoot his mother dead....

A similarly costly bureaucratic failure seems to have resulted in at least four deaths at Bethesda Naval Hospital. Commander Donald Billig, whose surgical ineptitude is alleged to have been the immediate cause of those deaths, was recruited by the Navy even though he was legally blind in one eye. Billig had attempted to join the Air Force shortly before he entered the Navy, but he failed four different eye tests administered by an Air Force doctor. "I asked him," the Air Force doctor told Chris Spolar of *The Washington Post*, "how in the heck can you be a surgeon when your depth perception is so bad?"

"Well," replied Billig, "you learn how to adapt."...

In the last year or so the evidence has been mounting that military medicine is in bad shape. The only way it is going to get better is through a fair draft. As things are now the competent doctor feels like a sucker if he sacrifices his $100,000 a year to enter the service. So incompetent doctors who can't earn enough on the outside are now too often at the head of the recruiting line....

Maybe you haven't noticed, but Jack Anderson's column has gotten a lot better since he made Joseph Spear his partner. Here is an excerpt from one of their recent columns. It shows what nice Washington liberals do when they aren't campaigning:

The EPA is considering the disposal of hazardous wastes by burning them at sea in special incinerator ships. One of the rival firms, Waste Management Inc., has the capability to incinerate at sea. The other doesn't.

Waste Management's rival, Rollins Environmental Services, operates several land-based incinerators. Obviously, if EPA were to decide that ocean incineration is the wave of the future, Rollins would be hurt.

So Rollins hired former Rep. Tom Evans, R-Del., now a Washington lawyer. Evans in turn hired National Strategies Marketing Group, a Washington political consulting firm run by Walter Mondale's former deputy campaign manager, Robert Beckel.

Beckel set up a telephone bank to make calls to residents of Brownsville, Texas, one of the ports where EPA is thinking of putting a dock for loading incinerator ships.

According to the phone script we obtained, Beckel's solicitors said, "Hello, this is (name of caller) calling for the Alliance to Save the Ocean." "The Alliance" is a paper organization created by Beckel. The caller would urge residents to help stop EPA's plans to burn "highly toxic PCBs" off the Brownsville coast.

In San Francisco, Beckel created the Ocean Tourism Council and hired two consultants to drum up support from the tourism industry. The consultants also testified on behalf of the "Council" at the EPA hearing, without disclosing that they were connected to Rollins.

Beckel said he sees nothing wrong with his lobbying techniques....

In the July/August issue of *AAA World*, the publication of the American Automobile Association, the lead article advocates spending "lots and lots of dollars" on rebuilding our highways. On page 18c of the same issue readers are advised, "On large purchases, avoid paying state sales tax by buying at a store that is not incorporated in your state." How are the states going to pay to rebuild their roads if AAA members don't pay their taxes?...

Alaska has revived my faint glimmer of hope that we may some day restore sanity to our legal system. How? By adopting at least in part the British "loser pays"

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principle. Loser pays discourages frivolous litigation by requiring the loser to foot the legal bills of the winner. Alaska doesn't go quite this far. But it does say that, if you reject a settlement offer and the jury then gives you less than the offer, you have to pay part of the other side's legal bills. This tends to cause litigants to accept reasonable settlements and thus reduces the number of cases that have to come to trial and consume the time of judges and juries....

Speaking of our judicial system, what do you think happens when you win a judgment of, say, $5,000 against someone who has wronged you? You get the $5,000, right? Wrong.

"Winning your case is the easy part," Judge Robert Baines told Alicia Shepard of the *San Jose Mercury News*. "Collecting is the tough part." In most jurisdictions the sheriff is supposed to help you, but his office is often understaffed and gives priority to the cases of influential creditors such as large department stores and automobile dealerships.

For the average citizen, writes Shepard, "collecting a judgment from a debtor who doesn't want to pay is almost guaranteed to be a head-banging, hair-pulling experience." She adds, "It generally costs to collect," meaning you have to pay an attorney or a collection agency. While your lawyer can get the defendant ordered to come into court to reveal his assets, Shepard reports that in San Jose only a third of those ordered to report do so. If they show up and tell the judge the nature and location of their assets, they can leave the courtroom and switch their deposits from one bank to another before you can get to them first with your lien....

If you've been in Washington long enough, you're bound to have friends who suddenly appear to be wealthy but who have not won a lottery or been the beneficiary of a rich relative's will. What you usually end up realizing is that they are retired federal employees—usually from State or AID—who have joined the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund. The reason you now see a Mercedes in their driveway is that they're drawing both their federal pension and their new salary. And judging from figures on these new salaries recently obtained by Rep. Matthew Martinez, you may soon be seeing a second Mercedes in their driveway.

Martinez, who is paid $69,000 a year, was astounded to find that 222 U.S. citizens working for the IMF make between $70,000 and $149,000. Since the World Bank pays comparable salaries and has 7,000 employees to the IMF's 1,600, you can imagine what the situation is there. If you want to find out about the world's best luxury hotels, just ask employees of these two organizations where they stay. In addition, both institutions have perks that are generous even by Washington standards. For the purchase of a home or for the education of his children, for example, an IMF employee may borrow at interest rates as low as 4 percent....

You have doubtless already heard that Jackie Presser has escaped indictment because he had been a confidential informant for the FBI. There have been few stories in my lifetime with such a distinct aroma as this one. In my imagination—and before anyone issues a libel summons, let me assure you it is my imagination not the world of fact that I am describing—the scene is the Nixon White House in the early seventies when—one actual or at least alleged fact—Presser's career as an informant began. We are in the office of Charles "Chuck" Colson, counselor to the president. He waves his cigar and says,

"Jackie, sit down and make yourself comfortable. I have an idea that could help us both."

"Oh yeah?"

"Yeah. You see, we need teamster votes. You need to keep out of jail."

"Yeah."

"Well, if you promise to get the teamsters to vote Republican, we'll keep you out of jail."

"How ya gonna do that?"

"Simple, Jackie, we're going to make you an FBI informer. You know how in England they have Purveyors to the Queen, well, you'll be Informer to the FBI. And that means the government can never even indict you much less put you to the inconvenience of a trial."

"Ya got a deal."...

—*Charles Peters*

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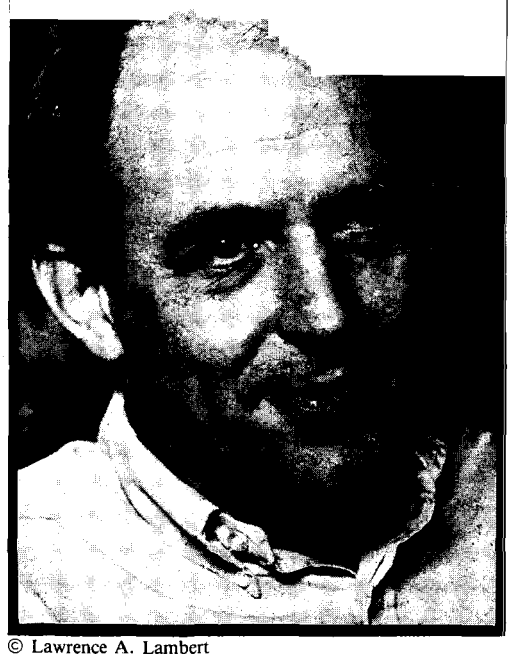
CHARLES MURRAY



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SAVIN UNDE

Ken Auletta interviews Charles Murray

No book in recent years has prompted as much debate over the legacy of the Great Society poverty programs as Charles Murray's Losing Ground. *It has become the intellectual fuel for the conservative drive to dismantle the programs and the central target for the liberal counteroffensive. Murray argues that the social programs of the past 20 years have slowed, and even reversed, earlier progress in reducing poverty, crime, ignorance, and discrimination. While we agree with some of the criticism of Murray's book (see Phillip Keisling's review, December 1984), we also feel that his case is more compelling than most liberals want to concede and that his facts and arguments have been at least partly misrepresented by many of his opponents. Murray raises important questions regarding the implicit messages of the poverty programs to those they were intended to benefit. He challenges liberals to look with clear eyes at whether the programs are really working or whether they just make people feel virtuous for providing them.*

To challenge Murray on these issues—and to give him an opportunity to respond to his critics —we turned to Ken Auletta, who writes for both The New Yorker *and the New York* Daily News. *A former New York City official, Auletta is known for his firsthand reporting on society's efforts to help those at the bottom. In his 1982 book,* The Underclass, *he concluded that "neither the right's desire to blame individuals nor the left's desire to blame the system" brings us any closer to understanding our responsibilty to aid those in need.*

—The Editors

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THE CLASS: KEN AULETTA

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Ken Auletta: What is the most outrageous thing that has been said about your book?

Charles Murray: That it was written in the service of a "radical political agenda," that I selected the evidence knowingly in order to make my points.

Auletta: Are you thinking of the [Robert] Greenstein piece in *The New Republic*? [March 25, 1985]

Murray: Yes, that's the one that hit the hardest because it was a big article in a prestigious magazine. Actually, I guess the most outrageous piece was Tony Brown's column, in which he said that I advocated concentration camps for blacks. I can't get so excited about a piece like that because it is so completely bizarre.

Auletta: Was there a common mistake in their views?

Murray: Well, the critics run the whole gamut from those who say that the book is both fraudulent and incompetent to those who say, "The guy makes a lot of good points, but he's wrong about such and such." On that spectrum, the common mistake has been to cast the argument of *Losing Ground* in terms of stereotypes that are often used by people who make similar points. So the story of Phyllis and Harold [a hypothetical couple used to illustrate the way welfare affects poor families] comes across to many critics as being a statement that young women figure up the amount of money they can make in welfare benefits and modulate their fertility behavior according to the rise and fall of that amount of money. And in unemployment the stereotype is "the lazy bums who are living a comfortable life on welfare rather than going out to work."

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These are stereotypes the right has used a lot, but I don't fault some critics for taking off from that....

Auletta: I want to come back later to your views on some of those things, but let me take them in some order. Obviously some liberals took a lot of offense at the book, and I wonder whether, from their own ideological perspective, they are not correct to take offense. For instance, you bridle that your complex message has gotten lost in some of the criticisms of the book. Yet even though you take pains to say, and I quote, "no single demon is to blame" for the persistence of poverty. Not AFDC [Aid to Families with Dependent Children], not food stamps, not law enforcement, not rent control. Isn't it true, however, that you view liberal nostrums as the chief culprit?

Murray: Well, the way you put it is correct, if by "nostrums" you include not only legislative programs but also court decisions, and especially an intellectual mindset that governs policy in more informal ways.

Auletta: And therefore, a good card-carrying liberal understandably takes offense with your thesis.

Murray: Yes. If you had said to me a liberal must bridle with what you said, then I would argue with you. But when you say "card-carrying," then you're right. There is a big difference between those people who supported these programs in the sixties and into the seventies but have been looking all the time at what is happening and getting disturbed and those who supported them in the sixties and seventies and in my view simply shut their eyes to what was going on around them.

Auletta: Let's stay with that a bit. First, list the programs in your view that have worked well.

Murray: The increases in Social Security benefits, I think, can be credited with a large part of the reduction of poverty among the elderly. A variety of educational programs either have worked or can work. In most cases, I think the statement is they can work. A good Headstart program can be a terrific thing for a three- or four-year-old child from a disadvantaged family. That is not to say that a whole bunch of Headstart programs worked beautifully, because I'm not sure they did. But there certainly is no reason why they couldn't work well. And I would generalize on that statement to a variety....

Auletta: Don't generalize yet, I want to go on with that in a minute. I want you to offer a laundry list of programs that worked. You've mentioned education and Social Security....

Murray: On superficial examination, Medicaid should have improved the health of poor people. If you accept the view that there was terrible access to medical care prior to Medicaid, there is certainly much better access after Medicaid, even if it's inefficient. Therefore, Medicaid *should* also have improved health. But I am still an agnostic inclining toward pessimism on that score, so I guess I can't include Medicaid in the list. A case can be made, I think, that in certain southern states the Voting Rights Act of 1965 hastened a process that was already underway. A case can be made that the Civil Rights Act of 1964 hastened a process that was already underway.

Auletta: Would you make that case?

Murray: I'm not speaking from data now; this is from my general reading on the issue and my own view of the situation. But I would make the case that they hastened those outcomes. I would also make the case that they produced, particularly regarding the Civil Rights Act of 1964, many other, unintended spinoffs. And I'm not sure the balance is a plus. Let it be heard loud and clear, I am saying civil rights and equal access to public accommodations are things that black Americans should have. I'm delighted to see that they have them. I think the government's role in enforcement of such things probably needs recasting.

Auletta: You've cited a few successes. What are the principles you extract from these successes?

Murray: The government knows how to educate kids who are ready to study. We know how to take a youngster who wants to be an electrician and teach him how to be an electrician if he is prepared to come to that training center and work his ass off, and pay attention, and go out there and stomp the streets looking for an electrician's job when he gets out. For that matter I think we know how to provide better prenatal care to young single women who are pregnant, if those young single women bring to that instruction a commitment to learn more about how they can take care of their babies. We can do all sorts of things with people who have passed a critical threshold of investment—an investment of time, of commitment, of, in some cases, small amounts of money. What we do not seem to be able to do is cajole people into wanting to make those initial investments.

I am speaking as one who spent a lot of years evaluating demonstration efforts where you try one approach, then you try another approach, then you try a third approach, and you still can't get people to make that initial investment.

Auletta: Let's take one experiment, Supported Work. It was targeted at a large group of ex-addicts, long-term welfare recipients, ex-

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offenders, and delinquent youth. With the long-term dependent women on welfare, they found a nearly 40 percent success rate. That is to say, roughly 40 percent of the women on welfare, who enrolled in this job program, came out, got a job, and got off of welfare. Is that a success, four out of ten?

Murray: Supported Work is something that I'm going to talk about at length, both because you wrote a book about it [*The Underclass*] and also because I spent quite a bit of time examining the technical evaluation of it.

Let's start with the welfare mothers, an excellent example. I think it was the two-year follow-up that showed that 42 percent of the AFDC participants were still employed. In the control group, those who had gotten none of this assistance whatsoever, 35 percent were employed. Now if you ignore all sorts of reasons why that gap might be inflated, you can say that the investment in Supported Work gave you an increment of seven percentage points of women who were employed—35 percent versus 42 percent.

To me, those results are not evidence of success; they are evidence of the enormous problems we face. Supported Work was in many ways the apotheosis of trying to cajole people to escape dependence. It provided them with training in certain kinds of job readiness skills, it provided them with counseling, it provided them with more or less guaranteed jobs for nine or 12 months. It provided them with a level of support that we cannot conceivably supply to huge numbers of people. I think it is probably too expensive to do that.

They tackled four different types of people, all of them hard-core. With one of those four groups, the two-year follow-up showed a success rate of 42 percent employed versus 35 percent. With one other, the ex-addicts, it was pretty much a wash. With the other two [school dropouts and ex-offenders] the program clearly failed. You add those up and tell me: Shall we think about the statistics in the two groups where you had the employment gap in the wrong direction? Or shall we simply discount those and say, "Well, with those, there's something wrong with the numbers. When 42 percent versus 35 percent goes in the right direction, it's evidence of big success, but 42 percent versus 35 percent in the wrong direction is not something you need to worry about"?

Auletta: No. You can come to another conclusion, following the notion of targeting. This program failed with ex-offenders and delinquent youth. You could then ask one of two sets of questions. You could ask why it failed. Or maybe you could say that we will put limited resources into the target group—in this case welfare mothers—that showed the most prospect for success. But you're still back with the fundamental question: What is success? If you get real close to a program, you're going to see individuals whose lives were touched and changed by these programs, and you'll therefore be more likely to conclude that there are some beneficial effects. But if you generalize from an arm chair, you might come to a different conclusion.

> 'Getting 10 million parents saying to kids, "You have to get out there and get a job no matter what," is a hell of a lot more effective in increasing job readiness than a government program.'

Murray: You observed that program. You observed real people who were clearly reacting to something good that had happened to them because of that program—and that's true. I've seen the same thing in programs for delinquents, in programs for kids in inner-city schools. But if you had spent all of your time dealing with people who *weren't* in the program you would have seen a variety of things that touched the lives of young single women and led them to get and hold a job they had not had before, which led them to do positive things. And these wouldn't have had anything to do with the program, they would have had to do with things that just happened in life. The question is, how do you get more of those things to happen? I say, get rid of all the programs and you will have lots more than you have now. Because what touches people's lives can be as simple as a parent saying to a kid as he is growing up, "You have to get out there and get a job no matter what." Getting ten million parents to say that is a hell of a lot more effective way of increasing "job-readiness" than a Supported Work program. I look at the those very minor results of Supported

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> 'I have become radicalized since the book came out. I feel much more strongly than I did a year ago that we will have to [end welfare support for healthy, working-age people] or live with an underclass of the size it is now.'

Work and say, this is not good enough. This is not a route out of the morass.

Auletta: But is that an argument for not pursuing a change in the design of the program, or is that an argument, in fact, to change it in some ways that might make it more successful?

Murray: It is clearly an argument in favor of tinkering with the design of the program, but I'd say that your definition of tinkering and mine are probably quite different.

Auletta: What's yours?

Murray: Well, I'll tell you how I would have dealt with, say, the unemployed youth. Here are kids who are saying to the government, and anybody else who will listen, "Dammit, we want a job." And so you provide them with those jobs. You make the jobs open, however, not just to kids who can bring evidence that they have been a drug addict or evidence that they have been a delinquent. You open it up to everybody in, say, that geographic area. Let's say it's a training program as well as an employment program—we're going to train the kids to be auto mechanics. Anybody can sign up and get in. So you've got an incoming class of 100 kids. They come in the first week, and it's tough. And there are certain prerequisites—math and reading, nothing excessive, nothing more than they will need to become a good auto mechanic. But more important, there will be a simple requirement that you have to attend and you have to work hard. If you don't work hard, you're not going to be able to master the material. The promise is, if you do all of this, you're going to walk out of here three months from now an auto mechanic, and garages all over the Washington and Virginia area are going to want to hire you.

Then you start kicking kids out. You kick them out when they don't show up on time. You kick them out when they want to get into a fight with the instructor. In the first cycle, you may get rid of 90 percent. The ten percent who get [through]—a highly self-selected group—are going to be good auto mechanics, and they are going to get good jobs. I argue that the next cycle you are going to have some different kinds of kids coming into the program, kids who are not going to call the instructor a motherfucker when the instructor tells them to do something because they've heard that if you do that you will get kicked out. So over a period of time, you're going to have honest-to-God training, not ersatz training, which is what we've had in the Job Corps so many times.

Auletta: There were some Supported Work programs that followed this rigorous example, and obviously there were other training programs that did as well. From my own exposure to people on a community level, many, not all, perhaps not most, believe that you set certain standards, and if people don't comply, if they come late, or they don't show up, or if they're disrespectful, they get thrown out. Period. But what I'm asking is, do you see a solution for that group, the "underclass," who have certain habitual or behavioral problems, who are not "socialized," yet who nevertheless are the people who most frighten the citizenry and have the highest propensity for criminal acts, dependency on welfare, and antisocial behavior?

Murray: Remember, I said to you the first time that maybe 90 percent flunk out. It's a part of my argument that, as time goes on, you'll get a smaller and smaller percentage because they will have a better understanding of what's required. Let's think about it in terms of specific youngsters that ran into that in Supported Work. Now sometimes their ways of seeing the world are so screwed up, you don't know what you can do with them. With that hard core, I am as pessimistic about what can be done through my approach as I am pessimistic about anyone else's.

But you also know from your own experience that very frequently the kids who are the most criminal, and the hardest to get close to, also are the brightest, most able kids. And they also are those who in their own, unfortunately twisted way, are very responsive to challenge. Now the way they respond is often destructive. The challenge is perceived as something "in their face." But those kids often can be reached even more easily than a lot of softer-core kids if you do provide the challenge. It's what teachers have said about kids from time immemorial. You take

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HOW WELFARE CAN WORK

by Michael Bernick

An important battle is taking place in California over reform of the state's welfare system

A proposal before the state legislature called the Employment Preparation Program (EPP) would require welfare recipients to try to find jobs, and if unsuccessful, to enroll in serious job training EPP avoids both the misplaced paternalism of the past two decades and the punitive tendencies of the right. The measure is bitterly opposed, however, by a coalition of liberal democrats, the American Civil Liberties Union, and welfare rights groups.

In many cases, the current welfare system fulfills its original purpose of helping women who are single parents get through hard times. But just as often, Aid to Families with Dependent Children is a terrible failure—a way of life rather than a form of short-term assistance. Half of the women who are receiving AFDC will be on the welfare rolls for eight years or more. These women account for the bulk of AFDC expenditures. Worse, this dependency tends to perpetuate itself. Children raised in welfare homes show considerably higher unemployment than comparable low-income youth.

Liberals have tended to dismiss welfare dependency as a conservative bugaboo. But the numbers are becoming unavoidable. In California, the AFDC rolls grew by more than 66 percent between 1970 and 1985, while the state population grew by only 27 percent. The increase in welfare rolls has continued even during the recent upswing in the state economy.

Michael Bernick is a founder and executive director of San Francisco Renaissance, an inner-city job-training and job-creation program.

Early this year, State Senator John Garamendi, a Democrat from rural Stockton, introduced EPP to try to halt the rise in dependency EPP focuses on adult welfare recipients who are not caring for children under age six. It would require these people to participate in three-day workshops on how to find employment, followed by a four-week supervised job search. Those unable to find jobs would either begin job training or work in public or private nonprofit agencies Individuals who refused to participate would receive reduced welfare payments, or none at all, for three months.

Welfare rights groups and the American Civil Liberties Union have offered familiar arguments in opposition to EEP. The Catholic bishop of Sacramento, for example, testified at a hearing on the proposal that it constituted involuntary servitude, and that welfare recipients should participate in training or work experience only voluntarily As the Coalition of California Rights Organization put it, "We support a bill which uses 'sugar' to obtain participation in lieu of the 'stick'

Are welfare reform efforts such as EEP really the work of right-wing sadists who have it in for both government and the poor? A number of recent projects suggest the contrary—that work requirements can break the pattern of dependency and help welfare recipients develop both their skills and their self-respect

In 1982, for example, the county of San Diego tested the value of job-search and work requirements by randomly assigning nearly 7,000 AFDC recipients to one of three groups. One group received help in finding jobs; a second group got similar help, but if they did not find jobs, they were given mandatory work assignments A third group was a control

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group, and received no special services.

Attendance at the job-search workshops was high, and nearly 25 percent of the participants found jobs. For those in the second group who didn't find employment, most of the assignments were entry-level clerical or maintenance positions with local government and nonprofit agencies: operating copying machines, preparing files, and helping to paint a public school, for example. The great majority of supervisors described the work as necessary, and said the participants demonstrated skills comparable to those of other employees.

Most of the participants regarded the work as a fair requirement for welfare benefits, and 60 percent said that their experiences would help them get a better job. When asked, "How do you feel most days about coming to work here?" nearly 70 percent answered they looked forward to the work day.

The long-term impact of the San Diego program in reducing welfare dependency remains to be measured. Thus far, however, the program has succeeded in helping women who entered as single parents and had long histories of dependency These welfare recipients had both higher employment rates and earnings than those in the control group who received no special help

Encouraging preliminary results also come from a demonstration project conducted during the past few years by Baltimore County. As in San Diego, an overwhelming majority of participants and supervisors there regard the work requirement as fair and the work as productive. Baltimore County has offered incentive payments to participants who show motivation and a positive attitude, and more than 70 percent of the participants have qualified for the bonuses

One limitation of both the San Diego and Baltimore projects is that they rarely provided more than rudimentary job skills. In an ideal program, participants would be able to choose among areas such as word processing, office machine repair, or basic literacy classes as an alternative to immediate work experience—with the same strict attendance requirements that apply at job sites.

Despite their shortcomings, the San Diego and Baltimore demonstrations ought to encourage similar mandatory programs elsewhere. But in California, where welfare rights organizations recently denounced the San Diego model as "slavery," liberal legislators have sought to replace the Garamendi legislation with a voluntary program. The trouble with such a program is that the majority of welfare recipients—especially long-term ones—will not take advantage of it In Baltimore County, for example, excellent job training programs were available for years before the recent demonstration project. More than 80 percent of the welfare participants in the demonstration had never used these services.

At San Francisco Renaissance, where I work, we run job training programs and five separate businesses that train and employ welfare recipients. We are constantly struck by the talent we discover. One former welfare recipient, for example, set up the shipping and receiving department of our cable assembly business. Equally striking, however, is the lack of structure and support in many welfare households Trainees suddenly drop out, or appear irregularly or late. For some, it is just too easy to fall back on public assistance.

Talk to adults who work with chronically unemployed youths—police, teachers, job training directors—and the same story unfolds: unemployment breeds in households where no parent works steadily—where no parent has *ever* worked steadily—and where there is little structure or sense of time. The benefits of a mandatory program go beyond the work experience. The simple process of getting up and going to work brings new discipline and structure to the welfare household. Even welfare recipients acknowledge that mandatory work and training can provide a helpful boost. A recent poll by the *Los Angeles Times* found that 59 percent of welfare recipients "have a favorable impression of workfare"

Mandatory programs alone will not end welfare dependency. But they are a starting point. Placing new expectations on welfare recipients helps these people, their families, and the communities in which they live. Work requirements are coming; 35 states have taken steps in this direction over the past four years. Welfare rights organizations and their supporters on the left should face this reality and work to design programs like EPP which can genuinely help people get back on their feet. The efforts of these groups so far have only perpetuated dependency, which is hardly doing poor people a favor.

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a youngster who in many ways is a tough case. You challenge him. You don't give an inch in terms of certain standards. And he responds.

Auletta: A lot of the kids you're talking about are 19, or let's say they're 22. They've grown up without a family in many cases—most, I daresay—and they are twisted. They are embittered. They feel crippled. They don't know how to deal with life. I'm talking about saying "please" or "thank you." In many cases they don't know how to use an alarm clock. They've never cashed a check in a bank. Often they are afraid of the white world. If they're simply confronted with discipline and authority without some sense of—to use a dirty liberal word—compassion, or a sense of a helping hand, you may lose them even though they are good prospects. Now what do you say about that group?

Murray: Is "compassion" really the word we want to use?

Auletta: I don't blush from using that word.

Murray: Because I was going to suggest as a substitute, "love." One thing you must communicate to that portion of the kids, if you're ever going to reach them, is not only demands and not only discipline but also love. I don't want to quibble with you about words, but I think that concept is important.

Auletta: Caring?

Murray: Caring, yes; compassion, no. You don't want, in any way, shape, or form, to say, "You poor thing, it's not really your fault." You say to them, "You have it in you to make it, and I'm going to make you make it! And I'm going to make you make it, because I want you to succeed so badly."

Auletta: And I'm going to help you....

Murray: [Pause—laughs.] Yes, except I bet that if you talk to ten teachers or ten people who have intervened in the lives of these kids and listened to the language they use, both the explicit and the tacit, I'm willing to bet that "help" is one word they avoid.

One thing that I have observed about the most effective people who deal with these kids is that they understand the seductions of paternalism, of patting them on the head and saying, "I'm going to help you."

Auletta: But help doesn't necessarily mean paternalism.

Murray: Yeah, but that's what it usually turns out to be.

Auletta: "I'm going to kick your ass!" is helping also.

Murray: True. We agree we want programs. But how do we do it? That's the point at which I would part company with a lot of people. To me, the way you get those kinds of effective programs is not through a CETA program; it's not through a multi-billion dollar program of any sort; it's not even through the United Way, which I regard as just another form of corporatized charity. You do it by getting people like me [laughs] and other ordinary citizens a lot more involved, contributing money, contributing their time. But I'm getting sidetracked. Any time we talk about this really hard-core group,I think we have to confront one of the most unpalatable truths, which is that, by the time these kids are 19 or 22, there are very few we can get to.

I have been extremely discouraged in some ways by an experience of my own. There's a tutoring program here in Washington that selects kids based on test scores and so forth, and it goes into inner-city schools and gives them tutoring. They are the most eager, inquisitive kids you've ever dealt with. They respond to challenge beautifully. They respond to incentives beautifully. What's discouraging is that these kids—who are 14 or 15 instead of 19 or 22 and have done well in school—have a very truncated future ahead of them. In some cases it's because they only speak black English; they can only get so far if they

PAUL R. DIMOND

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can't deal with the white world. In some cases it's because of the same fears of the white world you talked about. In other cases it's because they go back into the school system and are taunted for being high achievers or acting "white" and so have to conform to the peer pressure in high school. I see even *these* kids in the inner cities, at the ages of 14, 15, and 16, and I say that we've lost a lot of them already. They're gone. And it's that kind of experience that keeps driving me back to say we aren't going to solve these problems by attacking anywhere except at the prevention level. The only way you make major inroads is by some fundamental changes in the ways in which families are formed and children are raised.

Let's back up for a second and look at the development of black attitudes in the sixties. In an era when black assertiveness and confidence were soaring, and a black leader was getting the Nobel Peace prize, and black leaders occupied the high moral ground about any question, it would have been very easy to predict that in the next five or ten years we were going to see a black population, including the black poor, that would be adamant about taking what was theirs and fighting their way up and would be damned if they'd accept any favors from anybody. That's not what happened. In fact, in the sixties an attitude grew that certain ways of acting were demeaning. The phrase "Tom" took on whole new ramifications during the sixties.

The argument basically goes like this, as it has been expressed very straightforwardly by some young blacks: It's okay for Vietnamese to come here and push brooms and clean toilets and so forth. They've just gotten here. We've been waiting 300 years. We were held in slavery for all but the last 100 years of that. We've cleaned toilets already, and we are entitled to something more.

I think the generational split [in the black community] has been dramatic. As I have talked with the older generation of blacks, I have heard, in much more acerbic terms than one hears from conservative whites, a description of lazy, shiftless youngsters who don't know the meaning of work and who don't know what their parents have gone through in order to get them this far. It would be very heartening to find that this older generation was beginning to have its way. I do not know that to be true.

Auletta: Did you make a mistake in the last section of *Losing Ground*, where you speculated on whether or not we would not be better off just getting rid of all welfare. Was this the mistake that gave ammunition to critics to dismiss your argument?

Murray: I haven't made up my mind about that. I think on balance it was not. But I do fret. In fact I've reread the last chapter a few times and asked myself what would I change. I'm not sure. Remember, you're talking to a man who spent his career trying to make social programs work. That was my job as an evaluator, and in the last chapters of a book like this I'm supposed to tell people what the solutions are. The more I wrote, the more I backed myself into a corner. I would come up with something like a better Supported Work demonstration program, and the evaluator part of me said, "You don't really believe that it would work because you know all the ways it wouldn't work," so I would throw out that draft.

I finally got to the point where I had two positive things to say. One was that there's no reason why we can't have a terrific education system for poor people. We know how to do that. And so recommendations for that are in the last chapter. But I'm willing to go to the mat on affirmative action and other preferential treatment programs for blacks. I think they're pernicious and ought to be done away with. I said that in the last chapter, too.

Then I got to the welfare system, and I could not come up with any ideas for improvements that persuaded me. I finally realized that there *was* an answer I believed in. You want to cut illegitimate births among poor people? I know how to do that. You want to cut unemployment among young blacks? I know how to do that. You just rip away every kind of government support there is. What happens then? You're going to have lots of parents talking differently to daughters, and you're going to have lots of daughters talking differently to their boyfriends, and you're going to have lots of girls getting abortions and lots of babies being put up for adoption. You're not going to have nearly as many young single women keeping babies. And you're going to have lots of black kids who are suddenly going to find that it is not so demeaning after all to get a job sweeping floors, and they're going to keep those jobs.

What you saw in those last few pages of the book was my telling you the only solution that I couldn't talk myself out of based on all the previous data in the book. But there is ambivalence in that last chapter, too, which I guess came from my saying to myself, "You know, people are going to think you're a kook."

Auletta: Was that the only ambivalence?

Murray: No, there was also an ambivalence about whether I was right. Suppose we really did....

Auletta: Gut the programs. Wiped them out....

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Murray: In this regard I think I have become radicalized since the book came out. When I wrote it, I saw a lot of good results if there were no welfare supports for healthy working-age people. But I was also extremely scared of trying to run the world that way. I'm still very scared of the transition, the amount of misery, and so forth. But I feel much more strongly than I did a year ago that either we will have to go that route or else we will have to say that we will live with an underclass of the size it is now.

Auletta: What has radicalized you since the book came out? When [Norman] Podhoretz wrote *Making It*, he was so stunned by the reaction of his critics that it helped drive him further right. Is that what drives you here?

Murray: I don't think so, because in my case the seductions have all been the other way. There have been all sorts of people who have been ready to welcome me to the ranks of the neoliberals if only I would be. . .a little more sensible: "Charles be serious. You can't do away with all of these programs. The job is to design them better, to become a good incrementalist." Or, "Murray has made a real contribution in forcing us to face some hard questions if only he would understand that government is part of the solution, not part of the problem," and all that. So my seductions were not to make a new place for myself in the wilderness.

Auletta: What about the seductions from the people in the [Reagan] administration and from the right.

Murray: I think that the Reagan people consider me to be just about as much of a loose cannon as liberals do.

Auletta: You seem to be saying that the Reagan administration is in this middle consensus group, so therefore some of the things you've said threaten their kind of safe harbor.

Murray: When you play that back to me, it does seem odd to me to say that the Reagan administration is centrist, but it is. The cuts that the Reagan administration proposed recently in social programs are not draconian. There is no detectable enthusiasm that I can see for striking out on new paths.

Auletta: Do you support the safety net, or would you scrap that?

Murray: Should we talk about the problems of getting there or should I simply say, here's the end state I'd like to see?

Auletta: The end state.

Murray: The end state is an American society in which there are no federal income supports at all for working-age healthy people.

> 'It seems odd, but the Reagan administration is centrist. The cuts in social programs that the administration proposed are not draconian. There is no enthusiasm for striking out on new paths.'

Auletta: Let me interrupt so that I can understand this. What about an 18-year-old working woman who dropped out of school to have a child and who wants to go to work but obviously doesn't have anyone to care for the child at home. Do you advocate support for that person?

Murray: I'm going to add a couple of statements to my last answer, then I'll come to that. I would like to see the system joined with one in which poor people have much greater access to education and training opportunities.

Auletta: Just so that we're clear on this, you're saying that for the non-able-bodied there is a safety net.

Murray: In effect, yes. I'm not sure what the best system would be for that. But it doesn't bother me to have that kind of system.

Auletta: When you're saying it doesn't bother you, it bothers me to hear you say that. Do you believe that it's an affirmative government responsiblity to provide for those who are helpless, those who are not able-bodied?

Murray: What could bother me is this. A program for the disabled can easily become—and, I would argue, has easily become—as much a trap for people as the welfare system has. You hear street talk about the ways of playing games with disability insurance. You use a bad back to parlay yourself into something that ends up making you dependent when you didn't have to be. If you say to me that, at the federal level, you should help people who are physically or mentally disabled, my answer is "yes." It's damned tough to do so without creating more problems than you solve, but theoretically, "yes."

Auletta: Okay, what about that able-bodied young mother. . . .

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> 'We clearly siphon off a great deal of our concern and commitment [to the community] with the existing [welfare] system. If you get rid of that system, you are going to have a lot of people who have no rationalization for avoiding their commitments.'

Murray: We're now talking about my world, in which there is no federal system at all, and you're saying that you have an 18-year-old woman who is ready and willing to go to work but has no access to child care at home. We have just described the person who historically has been the object of the community's most tender concern. When AFDC was started back in the New Deal, it was popular at a time when you had all sorts of opposition to welfare. The reason it was popular was that it was designed to help young widows while their kids grew up. If you have a young woman in the community who is saying, "All I want is to support my family, and all I need from the community is day care," there is going to be no shortage of local programs to provide that assistance where it's needed.

Auletta: Charles, you know that in inner-city neighborhoods—whether it's Washington, New York, or Cleveland—you don't have that kind of infrastructure in the community.

Murray: You don't have it now. But Ken, what makes you think that you aren't going to have that, and have it in abundance, if you no longer have any of these programs coming down from above? We clearly siphon off a great deal of our concern and commitment with the existing system. And if you get rid of that system you are going to have an awful lot of people who have no rationalization for avoiding their commitments.

But there's another point when you ask me about this 18-year-old woman. We can quibble about the likelihood that there is going to be a place for her. But whatever we decide, don't compare my system with a zero-defect system. Compare my system and the number of people who splatter against the pavement with the one we have now. You can't simply say, "If you follow Murray's ideas you're going to have massive suffering among poor people in this country." We have massive suffering among poor people in this country right this minute, and it's a question of choosing the lesser evils.

Auletta: Isn't it also a question of where your bias sits? That is to say, it's almost an unprovable argument one way or the other. I can assert with equal force that more people will be hurt by your system than helped, or I could make just the reverse argument.

Murray: I'm not sure it's unprovable. The contribution of *Losing Ground*, I hope, is to force people to ask certain kinds of questions that they have never asked. In the past how many analyses of black youth unemployment have we had? And how many of those analysts have been willing to go out in the street and ask why there's unemployment, particularly when there are "help wanted" signs on that street? Why are they unemployed when they quit their last three jobs voluntarily?

Auletta: One of the reasons that some of the liberals reacted in a pained way to your book—although I must say I don't think you were savaged in the way George Gilder was or the way Norman Podhoretz was savaged 15 or so years ago by his former friends—is that they worry that some of the arguments you marshal will be used by forces on the right, who will be much less reasonable, much more fanatical, than Charles Murray. Has the right abused the material?

Murray: I hear this all the time. People say, "You clearly aren't a racist, and you clearly do worry about welfare and poor people. But these other folks are misusing what you said." I'm told that the Reagan administration is using *Losing Ground* as justification for all sorts of social budget cuts. Has anyone ever heard anybody in the administration mention *Losing Ground*? I haven't. Now, I won't say that it has been an unblemished record. I've been on radio talk shows where I've had to say to the host, "Wait a minute. That's not what I'm saying. Stop trying to make me out to be in support of such and such a position."

Auletta: Like what?

Murray: Oh, that the welfare lines are filled with people trying to exploit the system and are living high on the hog. And it has gotten pretty racist too. But that hasn't happened very often. One of the reactions by liberals to the book that has been most difficult to pin down, and the reason why so many people have been bothered by it, is ultimately linked to the racial issue. A great many of the reforms of the sixties were supposed to be for poor people. But what they real-

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EFUND? WHAT REFUND?

Why the IRS is screwing up

by Paul M. Barrett

Even though he's been running the outfit since 1981, Ronald Reagan still gets away with denouncing Big Government. Prominent in the Reagan pantheon of bureaucratic villains is the Internal Revenue Service. The president has fumed over the IRS's "demeaning practices" and accused it of treating people's earnings as its "personal property." Campaigning for tax reform this spring, Reagan sounded as if he were endorsing popular defiance of the IRS's mission. The tax code, he said, "corrupts otherwise honest people by encouraging them to cheat. . . . After all, . . . what's immoral about cheating a system that is itself a cheat? This isn't a sin, it's a duty."

Sadly, the IRS actually lived up to Reagan's damning portrayal this year. Once considered one of the most efficient bureaucracies in town, the agency has turned into an incompetent bully. Without justification, liens were placed on property and bank accounts were frozen. Returns were lost, purposely misplaced, even destroyed. Refunds were months late, and when they didn't arrive at all, the IRS told taxpayers to start from scratch and refile. If this kind of bureaucratic behavior were directed toward criminal tax evaders, it might be understandable. But its victims are ordinary, honest people who deserve to be treated decently by their government.

Administration officials have attempted to write off the nightmarish filing season as a fluke—the result of a balky new computer. But far more important than any mechanical breakdown is the shift of attitudes and priorities that has taken place inside the Reagan IRS. While the agency's workload has grown tremendously, the administration has cut by more than 20 percent the staff that processes returns, answers taxpayers' questions, and gets refunds out on time. To compensate, IRS supervisors have enforced unrealistic work quotas that, in turn, have led to errors, low employee morale, and the improper destruction of documents. The result: worse service for loyal customers and widespread ill will toward government in general. Then again, to a president whose main enemy is Washington, and who seems to resent paying any taxes at all, that may not sound like such a bad combination.

Paul M. Barrett is an editor of The Washington Monthly. *Peter Schmeisser assisted with research for this article.*

Don't call us, we'll call you

The first signals that 1985 would be the IRS's worst year ever came from Philadelphia, home to one of the agency's ten regional service centers. In January, businesses in several mid-Atlantic states served by the Philadelphia office began complaining about mysterious delinquency notices dispatched by the IRS computer. Threats to attach property followed, and at least five businesses had their assets impounded. By February it became clear that 27,000 corporate taxpayers had been mistakenly threatened because the IRS had lost track of $300 million in payments for taxes withheld from employees' paychecks in 1984.

In the following months, thousands of people victimized by the Philadelphia center, which serves taxpayers in Washington, D.C., Maryland,

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Delaware, and Pennsylvania, came forward with their own tales of woe. One diligent Philadelphia taxpayer, who filed in January, spent the better part of February, March, and April calling the IRS to find out why she hadn't gotten a refund. By April 17, the woman had called 203 times; the line was busy 189 times. On 11 occasions when she did get through, she was told the computer was down; no information available. Twice, IRS employees couldn't resolve the problem with the computer up and running. Finally, she got an answer: the IRS had no record of her return, so she would have to refile.

Explaining the agency's reasoning in this kind of situation, one IRS spokesman says, "There are some cases where the data [is] erased accidentally. We still have the actual paper documents, but they would be too time-consuming to find, so we ask for the duplicates." These people seem to forget that they work for the public, not the other way around. Apparently, the IRS now expects taxpayers to correct the government's mistakes and foot the bill as well.

The bad news out of Philadelphia transcended mere carelessness with individual returns. According to press accounts and information provided by IRS employees to congressional offices, no fewer than 27,000 tax returns were improperly shredded at the Philadelphia center. An undetermined number simply disappeared, and an estimated 100 returns were found hidden in a women's restroom. A General Accounting Office inquiry revealed that 150,000 taxpayers had received incorrect delinquency notices from Philadelphia alone.

The mayhem was not by any means limited to the City of Brotherly Love. At the IRS service center in Fresno, California, officials admitted in mid-May that workers had shredded 60,000 letters from people trying to resolve tax problems. Another 20,000 such letters were destroyed at the Austin, Texas center, while documents also disappeared in Andover, Massachusetts. Officials of the National Treasury Employees Union, which represents 60,000 IRS workers, say privately that there has been talk among employees of similar misdeeds throughout the country. Nor is this anything new. Overwhelming workloads have led to large-scale foul-ups for the last three to four years—well before the arrival of the new computer, says one union official, adding, "The difference is, this year, it's in the newspapers."

That's not what you hear at IRS headquarters in Washington. Officials there don't attribute the mishaps and delays to bad management. The culprit, they say, is their new $103 million computer system, which replaced older equipment at all ten regional centers. "We expected problems from the conversion, and we experienced somewhat more problems than we anticipated," IRS Commissioner Roscoe Egger said with considerable understatement during one in a series of uncomfortable appearances this spring before congressional committees.

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IRS officials discovered that the new software program adopted for the computer was inefficient and slowed the processing of returns. Difficulties also arose when employees attempted to transfer information in the regional centers to magnetic tape for shipment to a central information repository in Martinsburg, West Virginia. A variety of other bugs turned up across the country. In Philadelphia, for example, the computer's data storage unit failed to function 45 percent of the time in January and February, leaving many workers staring at blank video display terminals.

That the new computer was needed, there is little question. For more than 20 years, the IRS had been patching up a system designed in the late fifties. There was some debate, however, as to whether the new system should have been rushed into operation just before the 1985 filing season and after only minimal testing. A staff member for the House IRS oversight subcommittee says that "with 20/20 hindsight [Congress] might have expressed more skepticism" over the pace of computer modernization. But he points out that many of the programming flaws should be eliminated in coming years, and Congress may appropriate additional funds for more hardware in the fiscal year 1986 budget. "The real question is whether running computers solve all of the problems," he says. "And the answer is they don't....This is more than just Philadelphia. This is an agency with a lot of troubles."

Cooking up those numbers

The story behind the headlines about IRS computers running amok begins with some basic numbers. Not surprisingly, the workload of the IRS grows each year. In 1980, taxpayers filed 137.4 million returns; in 1985, 173.7 million. Five million additional returns are expected in 1986. Moreover, every time Congress changes the tax code, the IRS must retool with new computer programs and personnel training. Since 1980, there have been major revisions each year. Yet over the same five-year period, the total number of people working for the agency has remained essentially the same, approximately 87,500. And while the returns piled up higher and higher, the number of people in the two key areas serving the law-abiding taxpayer has fallen dramatically. Under Reagan, the staff that processes returns has shrunk by a fifth, from 28,744 to 23,111. The division that helps taxpayers find their way through the complexities of the tax laws has gone from 5,591 to 4,370, a 22 percent decline. The administration actually tried to kill the entire direct taxpayer assistance program, but Congress blocked the move.

The administration's explanation for cuts in processing and taxpayer assistance is a simple one: "productivity savings." Every year, automation is expected to increase, and managers look for new ways to use the same number of employees to do more work, the IRS has told Congress. It is, of course, laudable that the IRS would seek productivity savings and perfectly plausible that better machines and management would improve efficiency. But it is not a scientific certainty, as this year's mechanical snafus and mismanagement have demonstrated. "'Productivity improvements'—now that can be put in quotation marks," says Donald Alexander, IRS commissioner from 1973 to 1977. "Some of them are real, and some of them are imaginary." Congress, Alexander explains, will usually accept the administration's estimates for lack of any better information.

Congressional staff members responsible for analyzing the IRS confirm that legislative oversight often isn't all that it's cracked up to be. One House aide, after six months in IRS oversight, describes the experience: "Some administration spokesman comes before the committee and says 'X number of employees will do X job because of X productivity savings.' Someone like me makes the decision. I'm sitting here"—in a cramped and noisy office in the Longworth building—"what do I know about how many processing people versus enforcement people are needed in Philadelphia?"

Inadequate staffing in areas that serve the dutiful taxpayer has a direct effect on the quality of that service. A taxpayer in quest of her refund might intuitively sense this when she has to make 203 telephone calls to find out that the IRS has lost her return. But the best vantage point from which to view IRS operations is inside of a service center.

The people who process tax returns hold low-level civil service rankings, in the GS-4 range, and earn an average of $14,000 a year. (Overall, IRS salaries average more than $22,000 a year; in the national office, more than $40,000.) IRS processing employees work in sprawling, hanger-like buildings cluttered with paper and computer terminals. Pat Wilson, a union official and 20-year veteran at the Philadelphia center, says that filing seasons are always hectic, but only in the past three or four years have workers "started to crack and break. There's too much to do for this number of people." In a report completed in April,

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the General Accounting Office concluded that "inadequate staffing (in terms of numbers and/or skill) was one of the factors that contributed" to record backlogs in Philadelphia this year.

The pressure begins with the IRS's stringent "performance expectations." Imposed in 1980 in response to new civil service regulations, these standards are, in effect, work quotas. They set the minimum number of documents that an employee must process within a specified time period. Previously, service center employees were evaluated primarily by means of a "peer group average," which measured the output of an entire unit rather than that of individual workers. Under the new system, bonuses and promotions may be awarded for beating the quotas. Failing to meet them can lead to dismissal.

Clearly it is wise to encourage workers to meet reasonable output standards. But IRS employees contend that as the volume of returns has increased, and the number of workers in processing has decreased, service center managers have hiked the quotas to unrealistic levels. Employees say they have had to move paper more rapidly, without concern for accuracy. Desperate because they fall behind the required pace, workers say there is sometimes a gnawing temptation to ease their load by destroying documents. In the case of correspondence from taxpayers—for example, letters protesting incorrect delinquency notices—employees can meet their quotas simply by shredding the letters and reporting the cases resolved.

Under any sort of output requirement, workers tend to set aside difficult cases so they can fulfill the quota with easier ones, according to a former federal official with experience running a large bureaucracy. When the quotas become too demanding, says the former official, the difficult cases are the most likely candidates for calculated misplacement or destruction. That any of this activity could go undetected for months suggests a failure on the part of supervisors to keep close track of the paper flow at the service centers. When fewer documents emerge at the end of the processing line than went in, shouldn't that be a signal that something is amiss?

Work quota problems exist in most of the service centers, according to union officials. "Morale is terrible," says Michelle Cummings, a local union leader who works in the Ogden, Utah facility. Assigned to an "adjustments" unit, Cummings attempts to untangle the most complicated mistakes and inconsistencies in returns. Her quota is four cases per hour, which she says is "pretty difficult to do with easy ones" and sometimes "just impossible." Realizing that the requirement is often not feasible, supervisors instruct the adjustments staff to resolve "the immediate issue raised by the taxpayer and ignore any other problems" with the account, says Cummings.

The General Accounting Office three years ago confirmed such anecdotal evidence with a nationwide study showing that haste caused IRS workers to make nearly twice as many arithmetic mistakes in processing tax returns as taxpayers do in filling them out. At the time the study was conducted, IRS work quotas were considerably less demanding than they are today.

While fewer people process more returns with less accuracy, an equally overmatched taxpayer assistance staff tries to man the telephones and walk-in advice offices. This guidance has become more essential in recent years as the tax laws have reached the complexity level of quantum mechanics. Yet a GAO survey of telephone assistance in 1985 found that fewer than one-third of the tens of millions of taxpayers calling for help reached an IRS staff person on their first try; the rest hit busy signals or languished on permanent hold. Seventy-eight percent of such callers got through as recently as 1978. An IRS official told *The Washington Post* in March—apparently with a straight face—that it was "acceptable" if taxpayers had to make ten calls to get through on busy days and six on normal days. (The official didn't say how many taxpayers he thought slammed down the telephone in disgust and decided to fudge a little on their returns to get even.)

In any case, the IRS is gradually phasing out this kind of one-on-one personal assistance in favor of a computer answering service that plays pre-recorded answers for a limited number of possible questions.

Confused callers are getting less helpful advice because the administration's attempts to eliminate taxpayer assistance have driven away many competent employees, says Robert Tobias, president of the Treasury employees union. "It's not seen as a stable area, where you'll have your job next year," says Tobias. "People who looked at taxpayer assistance as a career, who looked to develop some expertise in dealing with the public, have simply abandoned it. . . . Now, the people who go into that area are either temporaries or are looking to get out to some other job as fast as possible."

As a result, most members of the assistance staff do not have the experience or skills to solve anything more than the simplest questions. "If it's more than 'where's my refund,'" one worker

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from the Philadelphia center says of the taxpayer assistance staff, "most times they don't have an answer." The employee explains that to resolve a complicated problem, the IRS adviser "might have to deal with a number of departments—adjustments and correspondence, the entity department, the file department, editing and coding." The telephone advisers, he says, "probably wouldn't make it through all that."

Take my staff, please

Major failings such as these should prompt immediate action by the person in charge. And they did. Commissioner Roscoe Egger went back to Congress this spring, asking for cuts in his budget and less personnel for processing and taxpayer assistance. "The deficit is growing, tax compliance is getting less, we've got snafus all over the country, and you're telling me you need less people?" demanded an incredulous Rep. J.J. Pickle, chairman of the House IRS oversight subcommittee. Upon the subcommittee's recommendation, the House rejected the administration's budget for the IRS and approved increases in funding and staffing.

Egger, no doubt, was relieved by this outcome. Although the commissioner was unavailable for comment, other agency officials privately acknowledge the obvious—that they need more rather than fewer workers. "We don't always get what we ask for," concedes Stanley Goldberg, assistant commissioner for returns and processing. Or, to put it more bluntly than loyal team players Egger or Goldberg would: the Treasury Department and the Office of Management and Budget have repeatedly refused IRS requests for increased money and manpower. "There was restraint on IRS, as on every other agency," says Edwin Dale, spokesman for the OMB. "There was consistency—that was the goal."

Even if tax collection were strictly a financial matter, the administration's thinking would be cockeyed. "Consistency" makes no sense in the case of the IRS, because unlike most other agencies, it produces far more money than it consumes. Depending where you put it, a dollar invested in the IRS will return between $5 and $20 in tax revenue. Increased funding for Internal Revenue is a potential multi-billion dollar deficit reduction plan that has been completely ignored by the White House and the OMB. It's almost as if some of the Reaganites are more than willing to see the IRS go hungry as one tactic in their holy war against government. Reagan has always believed that in the long run the only way to scale

The Politics and Development of the Federal Income Tax

John Witte

No program of the federal government has elicited so many calls for reform—and none has resisted reform efforts so consistently—as the income tax. In this book, John F. Witte provides the most detailed, clearly stated, accurate, and up-to-date exposition of the history of the federal income tax, while offering acute analysis of the political factors that have shaped it over more than a century. This work is essential source material for all policy makers and policy analysts, and a lucid and comprehensive survey for students in public policy, public administration, budget and tax policy, political economy, and contemporary political theory. In short, Witte explains in graphic detail why the income tax remains in virtual chaos, and just what the prospects are of future reform.

Witte's book, original in concept and boldly stated, will be essential reading not only for tax scholars, students, and professionals, but for all who are concerned with the form of American democracy and the political life of the nation.

John F. Witte, Professor of Political Science at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, is the author of *Democracy, Authority and Alienation in Work: Workers' Participation in an American Corporation* (University of Chicago Press, 1980). He has also contributed to several other books and professional journals.

1985. 464 pages. Cloth $25.00

Wisconsin
University of Wisconsin Press
114 N. Murray St., Madison, WI 53715

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down federal activities is to limit the money available to Congress for appropriations. You can do that by lowering taxes, and you can also do it by failing to support the agency that collects the taxes.

Starving the IRS, however, results in more than lost revenue. If the agency fails to perform competently, millions of willing taxpayers may be hurt. To this, IRS officials seem oblivious. Admitting that he needs more people in processing, Assistant Commissioner Goldberg, for example, must be conceding that IRS productivity claims are exaggerated—that the agency is shorthanded. No, Goldberg insists, the figures are accurate. "The proof of the pudding," he adds, "is in the eating—did we get the job done?"

The obvious answer is "no." Goldberg supposedly oversees the people who process returns. That he even asks the question suggests that he is something less than Johnny-on-the-spot regarding the troubled service centers. Take the work quotas, for example. Set by supervisors in the field, the standards must be approved by the national office. Goldberg says they are manageable, although a review is under way in the wake of the past tax filing season. Goldberg stresses that officials in Washington "don't sit here and say Jane Smith in Austin [should] keypunch in X number of documents."

Fair enough. But when asked to evaluate a variety of specific quotas cited by workers as unrealistic, Goldberg responds, "Whether [they are] reasonable or not, I don't know." In other words, Washington approves the numbers, apparently without the foggiest idea how many returns Jane Smith in Austin can keypunch in an hour and how many errors she's likely to make at a given speed. It would seem elementary that managers who use output quotas need to know whether they are creating impossible burdens for their workers and whether corners are being cut to meet the standards.

Over in the taxpayer assistance division, George O'Hanlon, the national "taxpayer ombudsman," speaks with pride about the hundreds of thousands of problems resolved in 1985. But when asked to consider the connection between millions of futile taxpayer inquiries and significant staff cuts, O'Hanlon—the people's advocate—says tersely, "I don't care to discuss that at this time." Ideally, how many more people would he like to have for taxpayer assistance? "I can't give you an idea on the numbers we need."

If the taxpayer ombudsman doesn't know how many more problem-solvers he needs, who does? Similarly, if IRS telephone advisers cannot tell an honest taxpayer how to fill out his return correctly or why his refund is months late, who can? Informing the taxpayer that the computer is down does not settle the matter. People count on refunds to make this month's payment on the car or to take the family on a vacation. And it's likely that they'll wonder why the mighty IRS didn't think to have a backup computer system available for such emergencies. "Those [IRS] people don't see it from the taxpayer's point of view," says Rep. Pickle. "They've become sufficient unto themselves, handling things the way they want to."

The compliant taxpayer who has been burned by the IRS probably would not be soothed very much if told that the administration has shifted resources to enforcement and added new traps for the dishonest. For instance, the agency now cross-checks the forms of interest and dividends paid with taxpayers' versions of the same information. Similar comparisons are being done with other deductions, and the administration has proposed the addition of 7,500 more auditors beginning in fiscal year 1987. Obviously, chasing down liars and crooks is important. But if enforcement is augmented at the expense of returns processing and taxpayer assistance, the IRS will find itself pursuing a lot of the wrong people. Judging from this year's performance, beefed up enforcement will yield more taxpayer inquiries to the service centers, more incorrect delinquency notices, more innocents snared in IRS nets because of human and computer processing errors. Who will be there to rescue them?

"Getting the tax returns and refunds under control is absolutely essential before you do anything else," says Sheldon Cohen, IRS commissioner during the Johnson administration. "You have compliant taxpayers out there who have confidence that you will get the job done." Without the cooperation of the vast majority who obey tax laws, the system would collapse in a swirl of blank Form 1040s. Just since 1980, the amount of delinquent taxes owed the government has increased by $25 billion to $87 billion.

For most people, dealing with the IRS is their main personal contact with the federal government. No other agency has such a direct impact on their lives. If they are harassed or hung up on by uninformed IRS employees, they might well be tempted to shout, "Get government off my back!" or applaud when someone else does. Trust lost is not easily regained. Cynicism sets in, and noncompliance becomes easier to justify. As a great tax reformer once said, cheating a system that is itself a cheat isn't a sin, it's a duty. ■

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MEMO OF THE MONTH

Department of the Treasury
Internal Revenue Service

PHILADELPHIA, PA 19255

In reply refer to: 28670421
JUNE 20, 1985 LTR 96C
578-03-5708
00373

DAYTON W & BETTIE HULL
10711 WEYMOUTH ST
GARRETT PARK, MD 20896

Social Security Number: 578-03-5708

Dear Mr. & Mrs. Hull:

We received your letter, dated May 15, 1985, about your Form 1040 for the tax period shown above. We are looking into the matter and will answer you more fully in 8212 days.

If you have any questions about this letter, please write to us at the address shown on this letter. If you prefer, you may call the IRS telephone number listed in your local directory. An employee there may be able to help you, but the office at the address shown on this letter is most familiar with your case.

If you write to us with questions about this letter, please provide your telephone number and the most convenient time for us to call you in case we need more information. Attach this letter to any correspondence to help us identify your case. Keep the copy for your records.

Thank you for your patience.

Sincerely yours,

Chief, Delinquent Accounts Section

Enclosure:
Copy of this letter

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AEROEN

"Air flow management does more than help Aerostar and Merkur get better mileage, it also contributes to better handling."

Larry Socha
Manager,
Exterior and Aerodynamics,
Design Engineering

Complete air flow management helps make Aerostar's fuel economy ratings better than those o many 1985 compact sedan

Ford Aerostar is one of the newest examples of the commitment to quality at Ford Motor Company; demonstrating leadership in applying aerodynamic principles to automotive design.

A swept back front end, spoilers, flush glass and door handles are all quality refinements that help Aerostar slip through the air with a whisper.

*26 EPA estimated city mileage (van).
23 EPA estimated city mileage (wago

Get it together—Buckle up!

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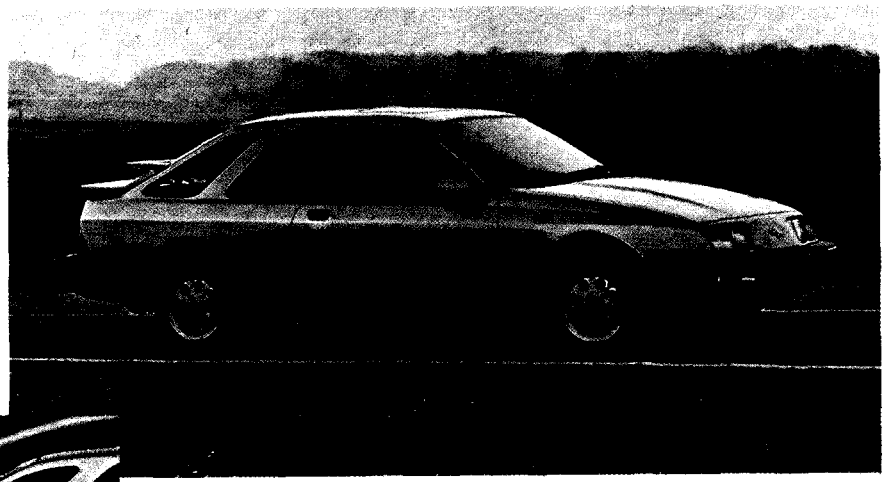
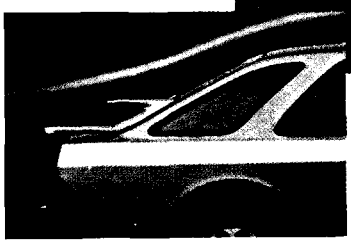
GINEERING



Merkur's biplane rear spoilers not only contribute to solid road feel but also help reduce the air turbulence behind the vehicle for greater aerodynamic efficiency.



Merkur uses a small scoop to take only as much air as the engine needs for cooling and let the rest flow over the car smoothly to exert "down force" on Merkur's biplane rear spoilers. Result: The feel of solid, in-touch-with-the-road, quality.

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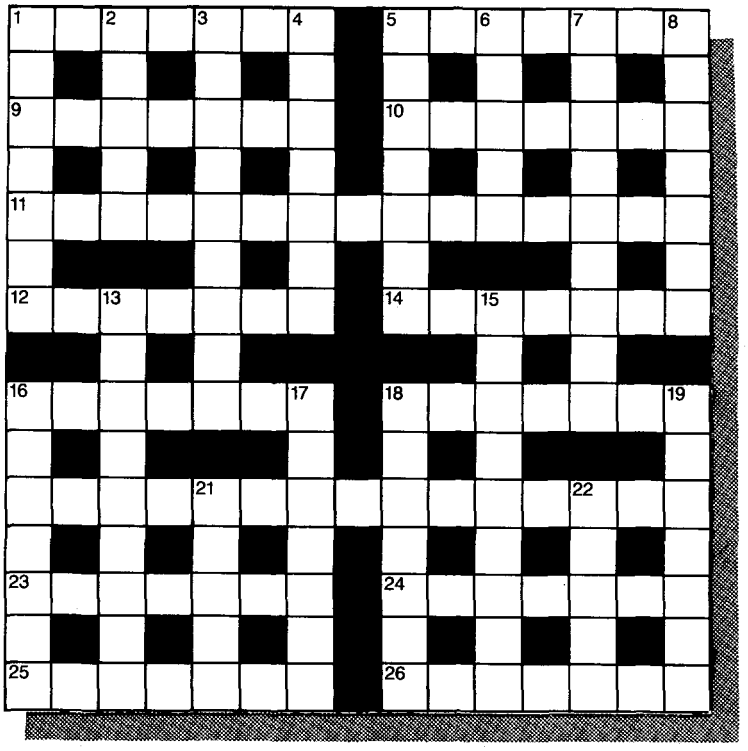
POLITICAL PUZZLE

by John Barclay

The numbers indicate the number of letters and words, e.g., (2, 3) means a two-letter word followed by a three-letter word. Groups of letters, e.g., USA, are treated as one word.



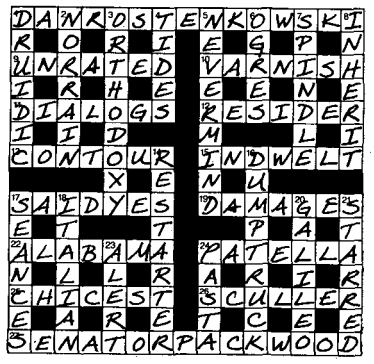
ACROSS

1. Prisoner calls for old transportation? (7)
5. Mere rip upset leader. (7)
9. Soldiers put English course among the missing. (7)
10. Properties passing sea test. (7)
11. Losers make up a dry comic patter. (10, 5)
12. House symbol erred so awkwardly. (3, 4)
14. Air meet arranged for oil country. (7)
16. Political bosses madly chase modern woman. (7)
18. Make doubly sure about payment? (7)
20. In group mixes ruin by apple cart. (10, 5)
23. List the wild plant. (7)
24. Attaching teeth or stew. (7)
25. Trained she-deer—they pay attention. (7)
26. Camp in Scottish river for peace. (7)

DOWN

1. Special containers put humor around psychiatric factor. (7)
2. Males wandering around in Oregon. (5)
3. Gourmet food makes Koch irate. (9)
4. Man and article in French summer came off. (7)
5. Immature leper and you and I gathered. (7)
6. Poets' strange block. (5)
7. Match fine crate in a way. (9)
8. Change appearance, change tersely. (7)
13. False Veep cited wrongly. (9)
15. Company tie pin shaken starting out. (9)
16. Mark sloppily 100 charts. (7)
17. Insects showed press I.D. (7)
18. Answered and created spontaneously. (7)
19. Clue and memo for major address. (7)
21. *"Et tu Brute?"* back in Montana. (5)
22. Lorelei's abode in her manner. (5)

Answers to last month's puzzle:



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Put the POLITICS *Back Into* POLITICAL SCIENCE

by Steven Waldman

"I remember all these mathematical formulas," Robert Caro recalls of his coursework as a Neiman Fellow at Harvard University. "Equations. Equations. They kept getting longer and longer. All of a sudden I looked at my notebook and said, 'This is all wrong. This isn't how highways get built.'"

Caro is explaining how he came to write *The Power Broker*, his penetrating study of Robert Moses, the former New York City highway czar who drew much of the map for that metropolis.

Previously a reporter at *Newsday*, Caro knew how highways got built; it was when Robert Moses wanted them built. His decision to tell the story resulted in a prize-winning account of the interaction between an individual and institutional power: how a wily and single-minded administrator, never elected to public office, came to tower over his supposed superiors who were elected. Caro says he never intended to be a biographer. But, "the more textbooks I read on political science and urban and regional planning, the more I felt they didn't have any relationship whatsoever to the realities of how political decisions are made."

Caro is not the first to conclude that much "political science," in its obsession with computer analyses and theoretical "models," is out of touch with the realities of government and power.

Steve Waldman majored in political science at Columbia University and is now a reporter for States News Service. Kirk Baert provided research for the article.

About a decade ago, a study called the "Political Science Utilization Directory" attempted to evaluate the discipline by asking political scientists working in government whether their education was helping them in their jobs. The assessment read like a Dean Martin roast. Political science, one Commerce Department official tartly suggested, should start to "deal with issues, theoretical or other, which are related in some way to reality, past or present." Perhaps the most pungent comment came from a grant officer at the Education Department who was asked about the employment prospects for political scientists at his agency. "Present Hiring: Only Two or Three of 2,000. Future Hiring: Less."

What prompts such responses? For a clue, one might turn to the *American Political Science Review*, a good barometer of the profession's academic concerns. One recent entry, "The Political Reliability of Italian Governments: An Exponential Survival Model," aimed to discover "a well-defined, systematic pattern in the downfall process of Italian government... from a probabilistic and dynamic perspective." There followed 19 pages of graphs, equations, and scholarly citations informing breathless readers that the "half-life" of an Italian government is "approximately 33 weeks" and that "the average government falls when it has accumulated exactly one unit of political stress."

An extreme example, of course. But it is neither

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exceptional, nor as funny as it might at first appear. Unfortunately, the effects of these scientistic obsessions extend well beyond the academy. The people who design computer models of the Italian government also teach successive generations of American college students what politics and government are all about. They write many of the books that inform us as citizens and voters. If these scholars were giving us readable accounts of how the institutions of our democracy really work, we could have a more informed political debate. We might even have better programs and policies. A recent remark by Sar Levitan, an economist at George Washington University, applied as much to political science as to the social sciences generally. "I'm not interested in running another regression analysis, another statistical model, " Levitan told *The New York Times*. "I'm not interested in writing in an obscure way, and being understood only by an elitist group."

Cheerleaders versus scientists

The notion of a political "science" is a fairly recent development in the west. Traditionally, political thought grew from first-hand observation and experience. Hobbes, Machiavelli, Locke, Mill, and others were all involved in the politics of their day, as were architects of American democracy, such as Jefferson and Madison. The *Federalist Papers* are lacking in multilinear equations. But they achieve a salty sense of political reality.

A semi-official history of the political science profession, *The Development of Political Science*, does not begin with the *Federalist Papers*. The starting point is almost a hundred years later. "We deliberately limited our attention to those aspects of the past which bear directly on the present 'state of the discipline,'" the authors explain. But if Madison and Jefferson didn't count, the members of this profession weren't sure in the early years who did.

The political science of the first decades of this century divided roughly into two schools. One was what Professor Thomas Reed called "education for democratic citizenship." Reed launched a crusade in the 1930s to bring political science to the people, producing a national radio program called "You and Your Government." "There is much too little being done by American colleges and universities in preparing young men and and women for actual participation in politics," he declared.

Yet for all the high-mindedness, the actual product of this approach tended towards conceptual flatulence and simplistic cheerleading for democracy. Civics texts would expound on city charters and the principle of separation of powers without exploring how these documents and formulations actually worked. They exhorted students to vote for the candidate of their choice. John W. Burgess, founder of the first American graduate school of political science at Columbia University late in the nineteenth century, underscored the need to lure American youth away from the German universities, which were infecting them with state socialism. "This evil is in the process of remedy by American schools of political science," Burgess said, just possibly to the reassurance of potential donors.

Alongside the stalwarts of civic virtue was a second school, which desired to establish the profession in the prestigious ranks of science. If Darwin could uncover the laws of evolution, and Freud the workings of the psyche, could not political scientists lay bare fixed principles of political behavior? This was the vision of Professor Charles Merriam of the University of Chicago, who wrote in 1925 that "jungle politics and laboratory science are incompatible." The directors of the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Fund agreed and put up millions of dollars for Merriam's Social Science Research Council, which in turn attracted promising new scholars to what became known as the "behavioral" approach.

Nevertheless, many political scientists remained close to the world of political action. The best example was Woodrow Wilson, who, two years before he took the president's oath of office, addressed the American Political Science Association as its president. "There is a statesmanship of thought and there is a statesmanship of action," Wilson said, urging scholars and politicians to "draw near to one another and feel they are engaged in a common enterprise."

In 1911, the APSA tried to survey the political activities of its members but had to abandon the project after it was deluged with information. One 1914 survey showed that 34 of 57 political scientists were politically involved in "more than a casual manner." Even Charles Merriam was a member of the Chicago City Council. More than half of the articles published in the *Political Science Quarterly* in five sample years in the early twentieth century dealt directly with current problems and events.

Academic participation in government reached a crest with the New Deal and, later, during World War II. Political scientists poured into Washington along with scholars of other stripes. Columbia alone sent not just the famous Brain

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Trust of Raymond Moley, Adolph Berle, and Rexford Tugwell, but lesser lights to such agencies as the Interstate Commission on Unemployment Insurance, the National Recovery Administration, and the Federal Emergency Board of Public Works.

If World War II brought yet more political scientists into government, it also brought a rude awakening. "The confrontation of theory and reality provoked, in most of the men who performed their stint in Washington or elsewhere, a strong sense of the inadequacies of the conventional approaches," wrote Robert Dahl of Yale, a leading exponent of scientistic methods.

This realization might have moved the profession to see that neither the behavioralist nor the civic booster approach was adequate and that political scientists needed to study more closely the agencies and bureaucracies in which they worked during the thirties and forties. But something else was happening around this time, namely, the rise of science into the innermost circles of American public policy.

The explosion of the atomic bomb had elevated nuclear physicists to a position of prominence in the military as the designers of democracy's arsenal. At the same time, the writings of John Maynard Keynes had given birth to "economic policy," the idea that governments, by manipulating such variables as taxes, spending, and the supply of money, could keep the entire economy on even keel. Paul Samuelson and other leading economists seemed to know something tangible and real that would keep us out of another depression. They could calculate the effect of a given tax cut on jobs and growth with the precision—so it was thought—of a physicist calculating the destructive capacity of a new bomb.

But political scientists—what did they know? Bearing what might well have appeared to be a "Dear John" letter to the profession, a special Committee on Wartime Services reported to the APSA in 1944 that "few departments indicate 'political science' as a necessary or even a highly desired background of knowledge for any of their research positions." It wasn't just a question of access to government jobs; it seemed to portend an exclusion from the national policy debate.

With this crisis of status, the urge to emulate the natural sciences really took hold in political science, as in other branches of social study. Retreat from the world of personal observation and experience was not universal, but the mainstream of the profession clearly leaned that way. A poll of political scientists in 1965 found that seven of the ten "great men" of their field were behavioralists.

> 'All things being equal, the person who doesn't participate in politics is in a better position' for tenure.
>
> —Professor Richard Falk

The key concepts of the new scientistic political science were modeling and quantification. It wasn't enough to explain how an agency or party caucus worked; the information had to be cast in terms of a model. Political scientists seemed to think they were assembling, print-out by print-out, a universal theory governing voters with the certainty of the principles governing atoms. Many turned methodological somersaults to demonstrate the obvious. So scholars produced lengthy equations that proved Italian governments tend to fall frequently and multivariant analyses of the determinants of congressional voting "behavior." (Conclusion: interest groups do exert influence, but further research is needed.) Hans Morgenthau, perhaps the most respected critic of behavioralism, commented on one book of that genre that it conveyed information "which Aristotle would have taken for granted."

In the eyes of the new political scientists, something was not known until it could be expressed as a number. Words were soft and indefinite; numbers were hard and conveyed authority. Hence these academics gravitated towards subjects that could be quantified and factored into computer models. Adding to the gravitational pull was the Ford Foundation, which supported the post-war behavioralism movement with millions of dollars for research. Through concerted lobbying, the APSA got the National Science Foundation to recognize political science as a bona fide "behavioral science," and funding and prestige began to flow in from this source as well.

The new orientation was reflected in the professional journals. From 1958 to 1968, for example, the *American Political Science Review* published only three articles on the urban crisis, four on racial conflicts, one on poverty, two on civil disobedience, and two on violence. However, readers did get such entries as "A Multi-Bloc

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Model of the International System," "Spatial Models of Party Competition," and "Dimensions of Political Systems: Factor Analysis of a Cross-Polity Survey."

But the people who labored over such esoterica were, unsurprisingly, much less involved in government and public affairs than the earlier generation had been. The Utilization Directory estimated in 1973 that the percentage of APSA members in federal, state, and local government was "substantially below one percent." *PS*, the journal of the APSA, could identify only 30 political scientists in the 50 state legislatures in 1979. The distance from government was both a symptom of the new emphasis on "science" and a cause of the increasingly sterile tone of political science writings. The preferred role was now that of expert consultant, which enabled academics to dispense learned counsel without leaving the universities or compromising their "objectivity." Where Charles Merriam, a pioneer of the earlier era, was a member of the Chicago City Council, a leader of the post-war behavioralists named David Easton was a consultant to Canada's Royal Commission on Bilingualism.

Modeling for tenure

The cult of scientistic political science did not go unquestioned. During the 1960s, in particular, the bitter unrest in the streets spilled over into the discipline that was supposed to be able to explain these events. Liberals attacked the status-quo bias of the "equilibrium" models favored by the mainstream, while conservatives like Leo Strauss denounced with equal fervor a bias towards liberalism. The scientistic fetish came in for renewed attack. One C.W. Harrington complained in a letter to the *American Political Science Review*, for example, that "there is but one article [in the last issue] that does not read as though written with the aid of a computer, or in some cases, actually written by a computer itself." Harrington took the *Review* to task for "recurrent cant"—"stochastic," "probabilistic," etc.—and suggested that the journal be published in two editions, one for political science and the other called the "American Computer Fondlers Review."

The Vietnam war in particular jolted the profession; by 1970 even leading behavioralists such as Karl Deutsch and Robert Dahl were willing to compromise their objectivity by signing a letter to President Nixon opposing the war. The convulsive events of the era just didn't fit the neat predictive models. "NAACP can be handled in the equilibrium power, but Black Power cannot," Charles McCoy and John Playford wrote in a 1967 essay.

Today, by most accounts, the behavioralists and their critics have reached a truce. There is still room in the discipline for a Wilson Carey McWilliams at Rutgers writing about the idea of fraternity in American history, or a Byron Shafer of Florida State University, who has chronicled the struggle for control of the Democratic party. But the mainstream is still in the quantitative, model-oriented mode. They "do dominate," Ross Baker of Rutgers observes—an assessment reinforced by the *American Political Science Review*, which can still resemble a *National Lampoon* parody of an academic journal. While what gets in can be confusing, what's left out can be even more so. From 1973 to 1975, for example, there were no articles on Watergate, the CIA, or Vietnam.

The quantifiers and modelers tend to perpetuate themselves by shaping career paths to advanced degrees and tenure. Playing it safe, many graduate students choose thesis topics that lend themselves to quantitative research. Picture the young political scientist, struggling to gain a toehold in a viciously competitive field. An assistant professor is more likely to impress the department chairman by constructing a diagram of input-output interactive feedbacks than of studying how the chairman of the Federal Maritime Commission uses or misuses power. Seventy-three percent of the political scientists polled in 1963 agreed that "much research...is undertaken simply because the projects lend themselves to research by a fashionable tool or because financial support can be readily secured," and there is little evidence of change since then.

The widely reported case of Paul Starr at Harvard University illustrates the prestige the quantifiers still enjoy in the social sciences generally. Starr, a sociologist, won a Pulitzer, among other prizes, for his book, *The Social Transformation of American Medicine*. Harvard President Derek Bok vetoed the decision of his Sociology Department to grant Starr tenure on the advice of an advisory committee that urged Bok to lean toward quantitative types more attuned to computer-modeling. Certainly the input-output diagrams will carry more weight than actual experience in the field. "Those with superior academic credentials are definitely preferred to those with policy experience," says Professor Richard Falk of Princeton. "All things being equal, the person who doesn't participate is in a better position."

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Originally, there was good reason for seeking a more empirical approach to political science. But in striving to be hardheaded, the profession went off the deep end. Scholars could have used quantitative research to inform judgment. They could have analyzed congressional budget votes, for example, as part of a study of how the inner dynamics of Congress affect such votes. They could have done their computer correlations of voting patterns in combination with gritty, first-hand reporting of how the parties actually enlist those loyalties at the local level. The tendency instead has been to use numbers as a substitute for judgment. "We don't want to float back to the armchair period," says James David Barber of Duke University. "[But] where it gets idiotic is the modeling—the incredible hubris that social life can be reduced with such precision."

Learning from Royko

This hubris comes across to students. The vision of politics that they encounter in "political science" is cold and aloof, conveying a sense of superiority towards democracy itself. "The training tends to distance you from [politics]," William McCallister, a political science professor at Barnard College, recalls of his education at the University of Chicago, still a behavioralist stronghold. "It channeled that interest in a way that made me more alienated from the political world."

When I took courses in political science a few years ago, I was struck by the contrast between the books on our reading lists by journalists and historians on the one hand and the political science texts on the other. With few exceptions, the former were far more valuable and interesting. For example, in my urban politics course, Mike Royko's *Boss*—a book about the late Mayor Richard Daley and the Chicago political machine—taught me more than did the political science models of municipal service delivery. Royko didn't have to set up a feedback model to grasp that neighborhoods that support the mayor get the streets cleaned faster. He was able to convey the drama of the political arena and still draw broad theoretical conclusions that made the book more than just a good read.

What we need is the best of both the pre- and post-war political science: scholars who know the literature and the theory, but who also seek direct exposure to the people and institutions they study. First-hand experience can give scholars a feel for the process side of government that they might otherwise miss: How do programs actually work? How do bureaucratic concerns—infighting and the like—prevent an agency from doing its job well? Watching government like a journalist—or, better yet, as a participant—can also reveal where policies fall short.

A recent investigation by the *Los Angeles Herald Examiner* provides a good example. An *Examiner* reporter spent weeks observing the operations of southern California unemployment compensation offices. The process seemed to run smoothly, as each day thousands of people lined up to receive their checks. But by interviewing scores of the recipients, the reporter discovered that many of them were wealthy film industry employees who qualified for support because they worked sporadically and were often technically "unemployed." A political scientist analyzing California's unemployment program could easily overlook such waste unless he saw the lines and talked to the recipients himself.

One way to bring political science back to reality would be to require those who teach the "science" of politics to gain practical experience during their graduate training—working in an unemployment office, managing a political campaign, or even running for city council. The APSA's Congressional Fellows program should be expanded to encompass work throughout the federal bureaucracy and in state and local governments as well.

People who have been there know the questions to ask and which numbers are important. Howard Wriggins, a Columbia professor of international affairs who was President Carter's ambassador to Sri Lanka and a staff member of the National Security Council, says he gained new "skepticism about elaborate methodologies" on the job. These "highly elaborate models are a distraction," he says, because they do not consider adequately the "marvelous variety of human beings, human forces." Nor, one might add, the ways institutions shape and channel those human forces.

Even in the realm of economics, it has become evident in recent years that the "elaborate models" are inadequate and that we need to pay more attention to "human forces," such as management and entrepreneurship, which do not lend themselves to statistical analysis. Now that we have plenty of books on why corporations aren't working, it's time for the political scientists to start telling us why government isn't working either. Just because Woodrow Wilson talked about the New Freedom instead of the New Systems Output, doesn't mean he was entirely on the wrong track. ■

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TIDBITS AND OUTRAGES

◆

CHILD MOLESTERS WILL STILL BE ASSIGNED TO DAY CARE CENTERS, HOWEVER

Judges in Montgomery County, Maryland have routinely sentenced drunk drivers to terms of "community service"—working in county-run liquor stores, *The Washington Post* revealed recently. The practice ended after the press report.

◆

BUT WE'RE DRAWING THE LINE WITH HERPES

The Oregon Court of Appeals ruled last month that a transit union official is entitled to workman's compensation benefits after suffering a ruptured cerebral aneurysm while having sexual intercourse.

BUT THE SECRETARY INSISTED THAT BUILDING A 100 PERCENT EFFECTIVE OUTERSPACE MISSILE DEFENSE SYSTEM WOULD BE A CINCH

"War games have revealed that as many as half of all NATO aircraft could be shot down by NATO troops, such as Belgians who don't recognize Dutch planes or Americans misidentifying West Germans," according to *The Washington Post*. In a report to Congress earlier this year, Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger said the problem would have "serious adverse impacts on combat

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◆

JAMES WATT LECTURED ON 'BLACKS, JEWS AND CRIPPLES: THE ART OF PUBLIC RELATIONS'

At a recent symposium for high-ranking bureaucrats, former EPA Administrator Anne Gorsuch Burford gave a speech entitled, "A Personal Perspective on the Ethics Requirements of a Federal Employee."

◆

HOW THE SERVICE SECTOR WILL PROVIDE 50 MILLION NEW JOBS BY 1992

According to *The Wall Street Journal*, one Madison Avenue ad agency photographer produces package labels for baked goods by photographing "a piece of cake on a plate first with four crumbs, then eight crumbs, then 12 crumbs." The photographer "once spent 7½ hours on a single chocolate cookie."

●

'WELL, GEE, I NEVER TAKE SENIOR CITIZENS' DISCOUNTS,' THE FORMER PRESIDENT POINTED OUT

Former President Gerald Ford collected $1.4 million last year in corporate director's fees and speaking honoraria. He also accepted $393,489 from the American taxpayers in the form of congressional and presidential pensions, federal expense reimbursements, and Social Security payments.

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Making Capitalism Moral

BY JOSEPH NOCERA

"Socialist theories have far less chance in America than in Europe," said the archbishop. "In the first place, the sentiment of personal dignity and responsibility and the spirit of enterprise are much developed in the American people. . . . Furthermore, there is room in the United States for all kinds of energy. Labor there insures honorable life; then, the greater number of Americans have conquered their situation by personal valor, at the price of efforts, perils, and heroic sacrifices. They are not disposed to share with others what they have gained by so much work."

The archbishop was John Ireland, head of the St. Paul archdiocese. It was the summer of 1894, and the America he spoke of so admiringly was a far tougher, far more cutthroat—and, in that sense, far less "Christian"—place than it is today. There was no such thing as welfare payments, no such thing as child labor laws, no such thing as subsidized medical care for the needy. The divide between rich and poor was enormous; the geometric growth of the middle class was still a long way off. The great capitalists of the day became known, not without reason, as the "robber barons." The poor did what they could to get by, without expecting their government to help them.

Nevertheless, to an Irishman facing another year of famine, America was not a place where the poor were exploited but a place where he might be able to fill his belly. To an Italian whose family had spent generations tied to a parcel of land that became less and less productive with each passing year, America offered a potential way out. When Archbishop Ireland looked out at his flock of Catholic immigrants, what he saw was not so much economic injustice as opportunity; not so much the exploitative nature of capitalism, as the obvious chance for his people to find a better life. That is why Archbishop Ireland, and the other American bishops of his era, could accept an economic system that was, at bottom, not rooted in Christian virtues and ideals, notwithstanding all the blather to the contrary spewed forth by capitalist cheerleaders from George Gilder and Michael Novak all the way back to Adam Smith himself. That is why, historically, as the Jesuit historian John Courtney Murray has written, "the Church in America has accepted this thing which is the American economy."

Ninety years later, the American bishops look out upon their flock—by now fully 25 percent of the population and represented at every level of society—and at the economic system in which they operate and see things in a far more damning light. They see a system in which "women and men are thrown out of work as a result of plant closings or national policies they are too weak to change." They see that "entire families today are frequently driven off the land because their small farms cannot compete with large agribusinesses." They see that "elderly people become homeless because they lack the resources to purchase the apartments they have lived in when the owner converts the buildings to condominiums." From such evidence they conclude that much is

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wrong with American capitalism. It is driven by the sin of greed; it promotes "inequality of income [while] there are poor, hungry and homeless people in our midst"; and it tolerates the existence of "sinful structures that institutionalize injustice."

These more recent quotes come, of course, from the first draft of the American bishops' pastoral letter on the economy, a product of four years of deliberation, which was first unveiled for public consumption within days of the 1984 presidential election. The final version, which was to be released this spring, has been postponed a year because the bishops have been so swamped with comments and criticism; a second draft of the letter is scheduled to appear in October. Nonetheless, the bishops can be expected to hew to their major theses. Despite vocal dissent from conservative Catholic laymen, the bishops reaffirmed the central goals of the project during a national conference in June. *The New York Times* reported "a resounding consensus of support" for the first draft's sweeping indictment of the failure of the American economy to provide for the poor.

Much, obviously, has changed in this country since the 1890s, though not all of that change has been what you might expect if all you had to go on was the word of American bishops, then and now. America today is a far more humane place than it was 90 years ago, and this is especially true in regard to American capitalism. Much of the inherent dog-eat-dog harshness of the system has been legislated away. With the election of Franklin Roosevelt (and subsequently John Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, and yes, Richard Nixon), the unfettered American capitalism that existed at the turn of the century has been tamed in many ways. Roosevelt's 100 Days established the principle (and the fact) that government could intervene in the market, theretofore the most sacred of sacred cows. Government could break up monopolies, or assure the rights of labor unions, or itself put the unemployed to work. In the 1960s and early 1970s, there were additions to the agenda: worker safety and the environment, for instance. We also erected a "safety net" for those who fell victim to the heartless vagaries of the market. Unapologetically, we took money from the rich—in the form of the progressive income tax—and gave to the poor.

The liberal imagination in the post-war era has been fixed on capitalism's losers, as opposed to its Horatio Algers. The liberal instinct has always been to distrust the market, to impose limits on the lengths to which the capitalist could go in pursuit of profit. For the most part this liberalism has prevailed. Today, only the most nuttily dogmatic libertarian would argue that the entire government apparatus erected since Roosevelt's time should be dismantled. Even someone like Michael Novak, who has spent most of the 1980s arguing (unconvincingly, in my view) in favor of the inherent morality of the market, does not call for, say, the dissolution of the Food and Drug Administration. For the right-wing as well as the left—for Jack Kemp as well as Ted Kennedy—the idea that government can soften capitalism's punches has become the status quo.

From Spellman to two Johns

In its heyday, liberalism was always informed as much by morality as by pragmatic politics. Making sure the hungry had enough to eat, or that the poor had shelter—there weren't many votes in that, not after the Depression at any rate. It was simply the right thing to do. You would think, therefore, that the country's moral and religious leaders would have been among the first to line up behind such noble sentiments. Some of them were, to be sure. But, curiously, not America's bishops, who could be found either sitting on the sidelines or running interference for the capitalists.

Why was this? Partly it was that most bishops saw what Archbishop Ireland had seen—that the blue-collar immigrant Catholic was better off in America, with its heartless capitalism and all, than he had been in Europe. Better to be grateful than to rock the boat. But as the decades passed, that perception became less a factor as other, more complicated reasons took hold.

The immigrant imperative has always been to become more American than the president; bishops, often themselves the sons of immigrants, were no less immune to that than their flocks. For much of this century, American Catholicism has had a strong nativist streak, most easily identified, alas, at its ugliest—Father Coughlin's radio diatribes, for example. Thus to criticize capitalism was to criticize America itself, and that was unthinkable.

Bishops, moreover, were men at the top of their profession; they often identified more strongly with other such men in different walks of life than with the poor. The scene in the film *True Confessions* in which the ambitious young priest Robert DeNiro wheels and deals for his diocese while playing a round of golf at the country club is pretty close to the mark. In real life, Francis Cardinal Spellman, the legendary bishop of New

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York for so many years, was never comfortable with the one saint in his midst, Dorothy Day, tolerating her Catholic Worker Movement but never encouraging her. Instead, Spellman reveled in the company of the men he considered his peers, some of whom were Catholic (Joe McCarthy, Joe Kennedy) and many of whom were not (Bernard Baruch, Robert Moses). Their values became his values; when Bernard Baruch whispered to him over lunch that the end of the Depression was just around the corner, it became that much easier to ignore the plight of the downtrodden. Spellman rarely attacked a public figure, but he once conducted a well-publicized feud with Eleanor Roosevelt. Not coincidentally, she was the person associated with Franklin Roosevelt's government most hated by Wall Street, for even more than her husband, she was considered the traitor to her class.

Finally, the American bishops needed the capitalists—or at least needed their money. How else could you build churches? How else could you run a school system? How else could you staff hospitals, if not by asking for money from those Catholics in your diocese who had "made it?" Pricking the consciences of your wealthiest parishioners was not exactly the way to buy the bricks and mortar you needed. Quite simply, the American bishops were loath to bite the hand that fed the Church.

But bishops can change, too, however belatedly. And change they did. First came Pope John XXIII's Second Vatican Council, which played a very important role in the transformation of the American Church. The Council, which ended in 1965, was the Church's great consciousness raiser, an event whose effects are being felt to this day. The radicalization of the Catholic Church in countries such as Holland, the "liberation theology" movement in South America, the outspokenness of Catholics everywhere on issues such as birth control and the ordination of women—all of these things can be traced in some way to the Council. Out of the Council, there also came a new spirit of activism in the Church, particularly at the grass-roots level, and a renewed emphasis on the poor and the have-nots.

In America, at the same time the Council was getting under way, John Kennedy was running for president. Garry Wills, in *Bare Ruined Choirs*, his influential book about Catholicism in the 1960s, makes much of the confluence of "the two Johns," and he is right to do so. The bulk of Kennedy volunteers were Catholics, and their conversion to the "new" Catholicism was an amazing thing. These were people who scarcely ten years

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In the new Catholic church, young men no longer became priests to escape an immigrant's ghetto; they were activists who wanted to put in place the social agenda of Pope John and President Kennedy

before had been among Joe McCarthy's most fervent supporters. Now they were just as solidly in the camp of the two Johns. They could speak with passion and eloquence about the crying need for programs such as Medicare, which earlier they would have condemned as "communistic." Because of the two Johns, the nature of the Catholic ministry in America changed too. No longer did young men become priests to escape an immigrant's ghetto; now they were idealists and activists, usually products of the middle class, who wanted to help put in place what they saw as the social agenda of the Council and Kennedy. When the civil rights movement geared up, and later the antiwar movement, these young idealistic priests and nuns were right in the thick of things, marching, protesting, and, in general, questioning the inherent justice of "the system."

Then, in 1972, one of those events took place that are barely noticed at the time but years later seem fraught with significance. Pope Paul VI named Jean Jadot, a career Vatican diplomat, to be apostolic delegate to the United States. In addition to acting as ambassador to the country to which he is assigned, the apostolic delegate is an adviser to the Pope on Church matters in that country, including the matter of naming new bishops. Prior to Jadot's arrival, most new bishops came out of the chanceries of the most important American sees; they were secretaries or advisers—cautious, conservative men whom their mentors had been grooming for years for positions of power. Jadot changed all that. He began insisting that new bishops have "pastoral" experience, and he began taking particular notice of the idealistic (and in many cases quite obscure) priests who scorned chancery work and who now populated the American Church. It wasn't long before he began suggesting to Rome that some of them might make good bishops. And often, they were made bishop—to the great surprise (and, no doubt, chagrin) of the current members of the hierarchy.

By the time Jadot returned to Rome in 1980, the revolution he had begun was largely complete: the American hierarchy was dominated by a different kind of men, with a different set of values. In Seattle, Archbishop Raymond G. Hunthausen today withholds a percentage of his taxes equal to the percentage of the Pentagon budget, and for this he is applauded by most of his brethren bishops. As a group, the bishops have recently condemned the arms race, and, specifically, America's role in accelerating it. The bishops have also backed the Catholic-dominated sanctuary movement, which harbors illegal aliens from El Salvador. This action is being taken in direct defiance of the Reagan administration. Twenty-five years ago, that would have been impossible. (Indeed, 25 years from now, it may again be impossible. It is worth noting that John Paul II has begun moving the pendulum in the other direction. The chief exemplar of the change is the archbishop of New York, John Cardinal O'Connor, widely regarded as a Church conservative, whose criticism of Geraldine Ferraro during the presidential election catapulted him into the headlines. O'Connor's positions, however, are still largely minority ones within the hierarchy, and, in fact, his actions during the election dismayed most of his fellow bishops.)

Obsessed by 'the system'

And now comes the bishops' critique of the economy, which—no surprise, given the modern history of the American hierarchy—is considerably less than glowing. On one level, there is something admirable about the modern bishops' willingness to raise their voices in dissent. In these smug "I've-got-mine-pal" times, it is important to be reminded of the pains of unemployment, of the 35 million Americans (nearly half of them children) who are poor, of the misery that prevails in so much of the world.

It is especially important to be reminded of what conditions like these imply for those of us

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who are better off. Here, the bishops take to the moral high ground, mincing no words, softening no blows. They quote Pope John Paul II's tough talk— "the needs of the poor take priority over the rich" —and then add their own two cents' worth: "No one can claim the name Christian and at the same time acquiesce in the hunger and homelessness that exists around the world and in our own country."

These are not the words of bishops dazzled by millionaire golfing partners or asking, hat in hand, for contributions from potential patrons. These are also not the words of politicians or power brokers. These are the words of religious leaders speaking to our conscience—shaming us —which is precisely what moral leadership is supposed to do.

Yet why, despite this laudable concern for the forgotten poor, does the pastoral leave one feeling so utterly cold? In part the answer is that the document is just that, a document, full of cautious phrasing, bureaucratic-sounding proposals, and old, failed ideas. Strip away the bishops' anger over the plight of the poor and focus instead on their solutions, and the words fall flat on the page. But there is also something more fundamental going on here. Though they never quite come out and say it, the bishops plainly feel uncomfortable with the idea of capitalism. It all seems so, well, unseemly—all these capitalists running around trying to make money. So greedy. So sinful. What they can't bring themselves to see is what John Ireland and men of his ilk saw: capitalism has this funny fringe benefit. While the capitalists are getting rich, people are being employed, and the general prosperity for all is increasing. That stubborn fact suggests something valid on which to build, as those bishops of 90 years ago implicitly understood, even if they didn't bother much about the need for moral guidance within the free enterprise system. To today's bishops, however, it is "the system" itself that is at fault, and the actions people might take within that system are practically irrelevant.

Ah, yes, "the system." Remember the days when people talked about the system and how it was the root of all injustice? The bishops remember. And why not? These are men whose vision of America was formed in the 1960s, and it shows. Reading the pastoral is a little like stepping into a time machine. We're back in the Great Society and the Other America, fighting the War on Poverty with government programs and dollars. The anachronism arises from the bishops' willful ignorance of anything—writings, studies,

THE WASHINGTON MONTHLY

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real life experience—that might discredit those old programs. To them Michael Harrington is still the teller of all truth; Charles Murray is just another right-wing crank. To them, the old solutions are still the right solutions. The anachronism also arises because of the way the bishops have framed their inquiry. Although the letter is ostensibly a critique of the entire economy, they write that "our fundamental norm is this: will this decision or policy help the poor and deprived members of the human community...?"

An exclusive focus on the poor was understandable in the early 1960s, when America was still king, and the only remaining task, it seemed, was to let the poor in on the seemingly bottomless bounty. But two decades later, with basic industries in decline and Japanese and Korean products continuing to flood our markets, the nation faces fundamental questions about its ability to generate that wealth in the first place. By their own predisposition, the bishops have opted out of the crucial moral questions surrounding our current economic troubles.

This is not to say that the bishops ignore enterprise altogether. They make all the requisite nods in that direction, and, yes, they acknowledge, however grudgingly, that capitalism generally has worked out better than any other modern system. But it is at these moments that their prose seems its least enthusiastic, when the bishops seem merely to be going through the motions. They don't develop the possibilities of enterprise tempered by moral guidance the way they develop, for instance, their impassioned defense of the welfare system. There is nothing of the elan one finds in admonitions such as: "Limits on...the accumulation of wealth are essential if we are to avoid what Pope Paul VI called 'the most evident form of moral underdevelopment,' namely avarice."

Leave Eurosocialism in Europe

The bishops' emphasis on the inherent injustice of "the system" causes them to take many a wrong turn, but three in particular stand out. The first is their obvious, if unstated, preference for an economical model along European lines—so-called Eurosocialism. It is an easy trap to fall into, for on the face of it, the Eurosocialist model sounds far more caring and humane than American-style capitalism. The bishops wring their hands over plant closings; in Europe, plants almost never close, even if they are unprofitable, because European governments (except Thatcher's, of course) believe jobs take precedence over profitability. The bishops worry about the unemployed; in Europe, the unemployed are well taken care of, often collecting almost as much money on the dole as they did when they were working. The bishops lament the plight of so many Americans in the Northeast who have had to move south to find work at half the pay they used to make; in Europe, that rarely happens. The bishops rise up in righteous indignation over the poor; in most European countries, the poor receive some form of "guaranteed national income." Indeed, in most of Europe, "the system" does take care of everyone. The national bureaucracies are overloaded with the kinds of programs the American bishops seem to pine for: "improvement and expansion of job placement services on both the local and national level....In an advanced industrial society like ours, all actors in society, including government, must actively and positively cooperate in forming national economic policies....We recommend the formation of local, state, and national coalitions to press for the design and implementation of job creation," and so on.

I lived in Europe long enough to see that what sounds good and caring on paper doesn't necessarily work out that way in the real world. Yes, the poor are taken care of, but where in such societies are the opportunities to cut across classes and make one's way in the world? Yes, the unemployed don't starve, but that doesn't mean they don't go to their graves feeling just as empty and useless as any unemployed person in America. Yes, there are bureaucracies aplenty, but the arteries of bureaucracy harden quickly and stifle the kind of economic creativity and ingenuity that is so valued in America. Fundamentally, the Europeans, like the American bishops, don't trust entrepreneurship and don't value the creation of wealth—they positively scorn it; being an industrialist is something you do if you can't get into the civil service. Hence the emphasis, again, like the bishops', is on the distribution of wealth rather than it's creation, and those Europeans who do have a good idea that will make them some money usually end up in America. (Such expatriate success stories were a staple of French journalism when I lived in France.) The result is stagnant societies, with very little growth or new prosperity and a class system that is set in stone.

It is the sense of blue sky, the hope that by hard work or ingenuity you can cross class barriers, that is completely missing in Europe—and that is the blessing of the American economy. If that sounds maudlin, just ask the Korean who owns the corner market or the Salvadoran who would give an arm for a green card. Which is not to say

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that American capitalism doesn't pose some difficult moral issues. Surely it does—the issues of plant closings and having to leave one's home to find work are particularly difficult. It is to say, however, that the grass is not necessarily greener in Europe. A system that seems less harsh—and more moral—on the surface, may, in fact, be just the opposite upon further inspection.

A second area where the bishops' analysis causes them to go astray is in their perception of the poor. If "the system" is the victimizer, then the poor must be the victims, right? As such, they are presumed to be in a position of automatic moral superiority. Of course, many of the poor have been victimized by forces beyond their control. And there is no question that these people need help—from the government, from all of us who are better off. But are all of the poor victims? And what sort of help actually helps them?

These are among the most hotly debated policy questions in the country. The bishops are oblivious to the debate. Their answer is the old answer: more money, more programs. They call for a welfare plan that doesn't "stigmatize" those on welfare, and they argue, among other things, that "eligibility for public assistance should not depend on work requirements or work tests." Yet, is it "moral" for people who are perfectly capable of working to get money from the state simply because they are not inclined to work? Do the bishops forget that most of the taxpayers providing that money are not in possession of "concentrations of wealth" but rather are working people who have things like mortgages to worry about? Is it really more "moral" to continue the kinds of programs that fueled the War on Poverty? Or is it less moral because those programs have fostered a "culture of welfare?" I don't pretend to know the answers, but I do suggest that the answers are not as simple as the bishops would have us believe.

Finally, there is the issue of individual charity. Spellman had his Dorothy Day blind spot, but so do these modern bishops. In some ways Spellman's was easier to understand. Dorothy Day was a true moral leader, preaching values by living them; her example contrasted so sharply with Spellman's that it shamed him. But today's bishops identify with the same concerns she did. So what's their excuse?

In liberal Christian circles, there is a school of thought according to which a Mother Theresa is

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The bishops show an unhealthy ambivalence toward capitalism, the central engine of the nation's economy. They fall short on the moral guidance that will make the system work well.

not a force for good in India. The argument goes like this: Mother Theresa helps the most impoverished of India's poor, but she does nothing to address the underlying causes of their poverty. She doesn't confront the government. She doesn't instigate rebellion. By her acts of charity she puts a patina of virtue upon a corrupt system and helps to prop it up. In the pastoral letter, the bishops seem to be buying this argument. Nowhere is Dorothy Day or Mother Theresa even mentioned, and rare indeed is the idea that we all bear some individual responsibility for the plight of the poor and the needy. The onus instead is on government, and the proposals revolve around ideas like expansion of the U.S. Employment Service and "gradual consolidation of programs for specific groups into a unified program of assistance coordinated by the federal government." After a while, you start wondering: is this spiritual counsel or a monograph from Brookings?

It is true that a night a week at the Salvation Army shelter is not going to eradicate poverty at its roots. But as people like Dorothy Day and Gandhi saw, the system doesn't really change until people do; if such change isn't the primary mission of religion, then what is? (How about, for example, the need for well-off Americans to give up entitlements such as Social Security when they're not needed, so that more is available for the poor?) Proposals to consolidate programs and the like, by speaking to everyone, really speak to no one. While the bishops do make the connection between individual behavior and the well-being of everyone else, they seem a lot more interested in programs.

Business needs the bishops

What is most dispiriting about the bishops' exercise is that capitalism could use a healthy dose of moral guidance these days. Like the bishops, most people have come to equate capitalism with big, impersonal corporations and with out-and-out greed, but that need not be the case. Capitalism is morally neutral; it can work good or ill depending on the nature of the enterprise and the ground rules the society lays down.

Today the ground rules are not very good. Too often, they bring out the worst in us rather than the best. We need, in short, moral leaven within the loaf of capitalism.

Some current church leaders seem to understand this. At the June meeting of the bishops' national conference, for example, Auxiliary Bishop Joseph M. Sullivan of Brooklyn said that American capitalism should be portrayed "as a good system that needs improvement." No danger of retreat to Cardinal Spellman's boosterism for greed in that modest dissent.

An obvious place to start is with the speculation and useless finagling called "paper enterprise." Corporate takeover wars, bizarre tax shelters, kinky speculation schemes, have reached epidemic proportions, draining both capital and talent away from the creation of jobs and wealth. Chevron borrowed $10 billion to buy Gulf Oil last year; Phillips, $4.5 billion to fend off raiders. No new jobs (except for lawyers) and no new oil, just a blizzard of paper.

There's also the question of interest. Right now the nation is sinking in debt; the merger wars are just the beginning. Last year American individuals, businesses, and governments went deeper in debt than in any 12-month period in our history. This debt is a heavy burden on both enterprise and government. Fourteen percent of the federal budget goes to pay off creditors, from wealthy foreign investors to everyone who happens to own a certificate of deposit.

In an earlier era, the Church saw unearned enrichment as a moral issue. The mere act of charging interest was called "usury," and the punishment was excommunication. I'll concede that may have been going too far. But increasingly it becomes apparent that the Church's concerns were practical as well as moral. We need to separate the wheat from the chaff. Why do the tax laws, for example, shine as favorably upon people who trade stocks and commodities as upon

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the farmers and businesspeople who create the wealth so traded? Why do we reward the land speculator—who reaps what he has not sown—as much as the individual who builds something useful, such as housing, upon that land (which the speculator makes more expensive)? The producer should take priority in the economic pecking order over the creditor or trader, and who better than the Church to propound the moral dimensions of that distinction?

Even more important is the design of the institutions through which business is conducted. Today the dominant institution of capitalism is the corporation owned by absentee shareholders. William Simon and others tell us that capitalism is a form of freedom. But the absentee-owned corporation eliminates freedom; it makes corporate managers absolutely beholden to the claims of shareholders for a maximum return on investment. In so doing, it tends to sever the moral links between enterprise and community. Even if the company president thinks he ought to install scrubbers on his smokestacks or he ought to keep the plant in Hometown instead of moving it to Taiwan, he is not free to do so (unless required by law) if it will mean less return. The shareholders could reward his well-doing with a lawsuit for wasting their assets—even if the company was still making a profit.

One remedy is external regulation that enables a conscientious manager to justify his actions to the shareholders. Another remedy is to make more room for decisions of conscience within the enterprise itself. Two means to this end are worker ownership and consumer cooperatives, and the bishops—to their credit—advocate these. Worker and coop owners are not beholden to absentee shareholders; they have more freedom to forsake some degree of profit to make the workplace safer, or to keep a plant in operation. Noting that worker ownership has saved numerous companies from bankruptcy, the bishops ask, "Why should it not give added strength to new or growing enterprises?" A good question.

But what of companies that are not worker owned? The bishops observe that business "is a genuine Christian vocation when carried out as a form of stewardship." Unfortunately, they do not follow up with guidance on how to exercise that stewardship when Stewart Mott is not your major shareholder and you are meeting with the stock analysts in New York tomorrow. One way is through family ownership. The laws today offer numerous inducements for family owners (of newspapers, for example) to "go public" or sell out to larger companies, thereby subjecting themselves to the bottom-line tyranny of the market. Family owners, like worker owners, can tell those stock analysts to kiss off and so have more leeway for moral decisions regarding their customers, workers, and communities. (Local ownership generally tends to reconcile the needs of enterprise and community; the owner of a local restaurant cares more about the condition of Main Street than Roy Rogers does.)

This is not to suggest that there aren't any greedy family businesses in America; some of them run company towns. Nor is it to suggest that every steelworker in this country would be distressed if his mill dumped some muck into the river. Family and worker ownership don't eliminate the need for regulation. But they tend to reduce that need by internalizing community values into the enterprise itself. They give managers more leeway to act upon the values to which the bishops rightly hold them. At the very least, such forms of ownership would eliminate the automatic alibi that faceless shareholders now provide and would make both owners and managers confront more directly their Christian duty to operate their enterprises in the best interests of the community as a whole.

The bishops say much about our economic life that is important and wise. They chastise us for materialism. They hold our economic life to a standard higher than the utility curves of the economic texts. But they also show an unhealthy ambivalence towards the central engine of the nation's economic health. Not sure whether they even like it, they fall short on the moral guidance that will make that system really work. It's too bad. A little moral guidance wouldn't be a bad thing right now. ■

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► *continued from page 22*
ly were, as Pat Moynihan has pointed out, was a way for white Americans to make good on their debt to black Americans. I think now a lot of people who consider themselves liberals, even "hardheaded" liberals who are willing to ask new questions, cling to some of the social programs as sort of the last evidence that they are on the side of the angels with regard to blacks. This is most obvious when it comes to affirmative action. Whenever I have been with a roomful of liberals, we have gotten very quickly off the topics that I discussed at great length in *Losing Ground* and zeroed in on affirmative action. It's as if affirmative action was the last refuge of the lapsed liberal. [Laughs.]

Auletta: And that racial issue manifests itself in your position of opposing affirmative action.

Murray: Yes. We all sit there and agree that in poor black communities the illegitimacy rate is about 80 percent and that is terrible. It's agreed that we have black unemployment rates that are sky-high among youth. They're sort of agreeing with me about the magnitude of those problems. It's as if we can then snap back and talk about affirmative action, which has a couple of effects. One, it covers their credentials. Second, it recasts the problem as a black problem as opposed to one of poor people. But we aren't looking at black problems, we're looking at problems of poor people.

Auletta: But if we're talking about the problems of poor people with no distinctions, why is it that the out-of-wedlock birthrate among blacks is so much worse than for whites?

Murray: If you have any data on illegitimacy among poor whites, I'd love to see it because I've been looking for it. It's pretty hard to find.

Auletta: Certainly there are figures on illegitmacy among whites....

Murray: *All* whites, not poor whites. One of the things I wanted to do was find out the illegitimacy rate among poor whites. My hypothesis is that illegitimacy varies by economic class, and it would be a salutary thing for whites to realize that the illegitimacy rate among the poor whites is close to that of blacks. All I have done so far is prove the remarkable lack of curiosity that social scientists have had regarding some very obvious questions.

Auletta: You mentioned earlier that hardheaded liberals were searching for fresh solutions. Where do you think one of those hardheaded liberals or, if you will, a neoliberal, might find common ground with *Losing Ground*?

Murray: In the proposition that even if we don't know how to help the underclass, at least we can stop punishing poor people who've done everything right. Leave AFDC where it is, leave food stamps where they are. We can't get rid of them. Fine. But at least stop punishing the parents in the inner city who raised their kids right, who told them to study hard and do what the teacher said. Now we send those kids to a school that has been so busy catering to the least able, to the most recalcitrant student, that they won't get a decent education. That's wrong. And if I have a friend who's a hardheaded liberal, I wish he'd think real hard about a voucher system. Because, God knows, middle-class urban whites sure send their kids to private schools. Let's give poor parents that same kind of power of choice.

Or take law enforcement. For heaven's sake, one of the most fundamental functions of government is to provide physical safety. So if you're a hardheaded liberal, don't talk to me about our incarceration rate and whether it's the highest in the world or whatever. Think about what it would be like to live in an inner-city community where you can't move around freely and safely. Let's at least get the bad guys off the streets so that the good folks are safe. In a variety of ways we can quit punishing the good people in poor communities, the ones who most deserve our consideration.

Auletta: But what about the neoliberal who then comes back and says, "But one of the things that has kept us calling ourselves liberals, even though we affix something to qualify it, is this belief in redistributing income, this belief in breaking down some of the class distinctions"? He's an optimist, and he says we're not going to give up. Yet the common ground you outline, in effect, gives up on a segment, call it the underclass, by saying we have to concentrate on the good people who have a better shot at making it.

Murray: Yes, it does in a sense "give up" on the hard-core underclass. But I am suggesting that it is also proper that we distinguish among certain qualities in people, that we create a society that does recognize class distinctions but not distinctions based on how much money you take in, which in many ways is the ethic I think we have bequeathed in the last couple of decades to poor people. I want to see a social policy that lets the man who is a janitor but who has raised a family think of himself as being special by virtue of having held a job and raised a family. He's one of the good people. He is the backbone of the country. He's got to be able to think of himself that way, and a social policy that puts him back on a pedestal has done no small good. ■

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WHO'S WHO in the Administration

Don't look for any more dissenting opinions from the Office of Management and Budget. **David Stockman**'s replacement, **James Miller**, will do what he's told by the White House, according to sources familiar with Miller's government career. In an earlier stint at OMB, Miller worked on the management side. While the budget staff wrestles with the federal deficit, the management staff is responsible for things such as coordinating statistical studies and administering the Paperwork Reduction Act. As chairman of the Federal Trade Commission, Miller was a dogged opponent of federal regulation but had a reputation for not doing his homework on many cases. Lacking experience with broad budgetary matters, he has "no theoretical basis on which to make policy independent of the White House staff," says one well-placed source. And that's probably the best explanation you'll get for why **Donald Regan**, chief of the president's staff, chose a person of such modest qualifications to head OMB....

With the departure of **Edward Rollins** and **Max Friedersdorf** imminent, the breakup of the Reagan first-term gang is almost complete. And as the summer's slogging, indecisive budget battle demonstrated, the loss of talented political operators has already diminished the president's ability to have his way on Capitol Hill. Rollins, who will leave his post as political director to start a consulting business, has had little success influencing Regan to take a more conciliatory stance toward Congress. On at least one occasion, Regan is reported to have vociferously rebuked Rollins simply for reporting widespread animosity toward the White House among Senate Republicans. Friedersdorf has had similar difficulties as congressional liaison and has been far less effective on the Hill than he was during the first term. In preparation for what the president has called a "major fall offensive" on spending and tax issues, Regan will turn to two proven team players as replacements. Friedersdorf's deputy, **M. B. Oglesby**, will receive expanded responsibility for congressional liaison, while **Mitchell Daniels Jr.**, who had been Rollins's deputy, will take over as political director....

In addition to his problems with Congress, Regan had been having trouble keeping up with the administrative details of running the senior staff. In midsummer he hired **Dennis Thomas**, a former White House lobbyist, to help with the growing workload. Thomas will probably take over some of the duties previously handled by **Michael Deaver** and may also run the White House personnel office....

The only holdover from the first term whose star seems to be rising is **Larry Speakes**, deputy press secretary and chief White House spokesman. While the press corps complains about his increasingly confrontational style, Speakes has enjoyed considerably more authority and visibility under Regan. During the the first few days of the president's recovery from intestinal surgery, Speakes was one of the few top aides, along with Regan, who regularly met with Reagan....

Just when you thought it safe not to think about presidential campaigning, the Democrats are forming up for the the 1988 nomination race. Those who are acting like candidates include Governors **Bruce Babbitt** and **Mario Cuomo** and Senators **Gary Hart** and **Edward Kennedy**....

In our assignment of disaster responsibility in the June issue, we gave **Robert McFarlane** credit only for the Marine barracks bombing in Beirut. Insiders tell us that he also helped plan the Mayaguez operation.

In

WHITE HOUSE

Assistant to the President for Political and Governmental Affairs—**Mitchell E. Daniels Jr.** has been director of the Intergovernmental Affairs Office.

Director of Congressional Liaison—**M. B. Oglesby** has been assistant to the president for legislative affairs.

Director of the Office of Management and Budget—**James Miller** has been chairman of the Federal Trade Commission.

Director of the Office of Personnel Management—**Constance J. Horner** has been an associate director of the Office of Management and Budget.

DEFENSE

Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs—**Robert B. Sims** has been deputy White House press secretary.

STATE

Assistant Secretary for European and Canadian Affairs—**Rozanne L. Ridgway** has been ambassador to East Germany.

Ambassador to El Salvador—**Edwin G. Corr** has been ambassador to Bolivia.

Ambassador to Israel—**Thomas R. Pickering** has been ambassador to El Salvador.

Ambassador to West Germany—**Richard R. Burt** has been assistant secretary for European affairs.

Out

Assistant to the President for Political and Governmental Affairs—**Edward J. Rollins** will start a political consulting business.

Director of the Office of Management and Budget—**David Stockman** has resigned and will join the New York investment firm, Salomon Brothers.

DEFENSE

Secretary of the Air Force—**Verne Orr** has resigned effective November 30.

AGENCIES AND COMMISSIONS

Director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency—**Louis O. Giuffrida** has resigned.

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The Scars of Busing

by Nicholas Lemann

Over the years, this magazine has been saying that book-length nonfiction that combines the rich humanity of novels with journalism's reportorial and moral zeal can be the very best way to illuminate public affairs—to get discussion of politics and government out of the realm of caution, posturing, and self-interest. With that well-loved *Washington Monthly* gift for repeating ourselves infinitely when we care about something, we've again and again cited the same book as an example of what we mean: David Halberstam's *The Best and the Brightest.* Now, at last, there's another book to add: *Common Ground,** by J. Anthony Lukas.

Common Ground is a very long, dense, richly detailed account of the first two years of busing in Boston in the mid-seventies, told by interweaving the public events with the stories of three families, one poor black, one poor white, and one upper-middle-class white liberal. What makes it such a great achievement isn't Lukas's writing, which is serviceable, or his thinking, on which more later, but the combination of two other qualities: thorough reporting and humanity. Writers about lower-class people whom we think of as towering figures—Jacob Riis, John Reed, Jack London, James Agee—in fact were never able to triumph over their impulse to chide, or excuse, or recoil in horror, and achieve a true empathy for their subjects. Lukas does, through both doggedness and purity of purpose. He wants not to prove a theory, or to posture as a journalist-hero, but to explain what happened.

As everyone must know by now, it's a tragic story. Busing in Boston exposed how bad race relations really are in the urban North. It set off a wave of white resistance as ugly as anything that happened in Alabama and Mississippi in the sixties and in the long run seems only to have hastened the exodus of the white middle class from the Boston public school system. In his retelling, Lukas makes it seem even more tragic than that. By constantly setting the realities of busing against the intellectual and spiritual highmindedness for which Boston is famous (this culminates in a horrifying set-piece about a black-white rumble on July 4, 1976), he paints a much darker picture than we're accustomed to of America's relationship with its stated basic principles. One finishes this book feeling almost completely hopeless about the possibility of healing race and class hostilities in this country.

Lukas puts busing in the context of a longstanding tension between two fundamental values: equality and community. We expect public schools perfectly to embody both, which, in big cities, they don't. More specifically, the context of *Common Ground* is the Irish-American world of Boston, which is one of many distinctive local cultures around the country that since World War II have been overwhelmed by the national culture. The rationale for busing was compelling, on the terms of the national culture, and nonexistent, on the terms of the Boston Irish. It was something forced on the Irish to achieve a greater good that wouldn't affect them. But by the seventies, after four or five generations of assimilation, what was left of the pure Irish inner-city culture was small, powerless, and bitter. The legatees of the powerful Irish political tradition—Ted Kennedy, Tip O'Neill, Mayor Kevin White, Judge W. Arthur Garrity—were, as Lukas shows, disinclined to stand firmly in the way of busing because, though their roots were in the Irish culture, their lives and aspirations were in the national culture. The poor Irish, lacking the mighty church-state institutional edifice that had protected and guided them in years past, were left to sink into racism.

The poor white family in this book, the McGoffs, lives in a housing project in the tough Irish enclave of Charlestown. Several McGoffs become leaders of the local antibusing movement. The poor black family, the Twymons, lives in a project in the South End and sends a daughter on the bus to Charlestown High School. For both families, busing is a disaster. It means that their children get a worse education and that they are plunged into race-hatred, though it's a

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sign of Lukas's skill that the enormous theoretical appeal of busing is never forgotten. One's heart soars during the few tiny moments of racial harmony at Charlestown High, but these are far outweighed by an endless series of fights and tauntings. Though the McGoffs are good at heart and their fury understandable, it's still impossible not to be horrified by Charlestown's response. Theirs isn't the familiar case against busing—would you put *your* kid on the bus? The McGoffs and their friends aren't bused; they're lashing out with real cruelty at a handful of black kids sent to their school, which they still firmly control. Busing for the people of Charlestown turns into an exhilarating, slightly out-of-control exercise in unity against the many, many slights of the outside world. Though they talk about the anti-busing movement in lofty terms of civil disobedience, most of the time it seems to be instead a clear example of how hate can unite people just as easily as love.

Lukas's white liberal family, the Divers, moves to the South End, near the Twymons, in the late sixties in hope of creating a city neighborhood integrated by race and class. They, too, are good—in fact, outstandingly good—people, but, though they support busing, when the orders come for one of their kids, they use their influence to get him exempted. Other cities have had much better experiences with busing than Boston, and in large part that's because Boston's is the most grotesque case of the decision-making class not having to live by the rules it sets for everybody else. Not one of the many upper-middle-class Bostonians who parade through the pages of *Common Ground* actually participates in the busing program, just as not one of them sent a son to Vietnam, where many poor Boston kids died. No wonder Charlestown despises and won't listen to the people who are supposed to be its city's leaders.

In a brief author's note, Lukas says of his families, "At first, I thought I read clear moral imperatives in the geometry of their intersecting lives, but the more time I spent with them, the harder it became to assign easy labels of guilt or virtue." There's always a trade-off for a writer between capturing the nuances of real life and thinking over the evidence in order to draw conclusions, and Lukas has come down entirely on the side of the nuances. Almost nowhere in 674 pages does he, say, pass judgment on anyone or anything; although I think he'd say busing was a failure, I couldn't produce a passage in the book to prove it. The only times he veers even slightly into scorn are when he discusses powerful peo-

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ple who see government entirely in abstract (in the case of judges and professors) or symbolic (in the case of politicians) terms. He implies that busing would have gone much better if Judge Garrity had adopted a streetwise pol's plan over his own.

So *Common Ground* has to be kind of a source-book, rather than an explicit beacon, for those interested in figuring out what we do about urban problems. It is very difficult to get anyone to open up in the way Lukas's three families have, especially people like the McGoffs and the Twymons, who are hostile to outsiders. Somehow Lukas has won their trust, which he never abuses, and he recounts the families' lives at a level of almost total intimacy. By going through events in what must have been many hours of long, painfully specific interviews, he's able to interweave the three families' stories in a seamless, intricately constructed narrative, beginning with the night of Martin Luther King's assassination. Every time a larger issue crops up—urban renewal, police patrols, changes in the Catholic church—Lukas gamely produces a lucid explanation, exactly as much as you want to know. And he breaks from the narrative five times to profile, vividly, the major public figures involved in busing, which helps make *Common Ground* work as a multi-layered portrait of Boston as a whole.

It could be argued that the problems of Charlestown are uniquely Boston's, but what gave rise to busing was liberals' horror about life in the black ghettos, which is the same in every big city. One of the bleakest aspects of *Common Ground* is the fate of its black family, the Twymons, who, in the three generations we see, move from unhappily married working poor to the precarious edge of the underclass. Rachel Twymon, the head of the family and a smart, tough, devout woman, becomes a welfare mother. She sees one of her daughters have a baby at thirteen and several of her sons join the gang of criminals that, by the end of the book, drives the Divers out of the South End and to the suburbs, their ideals shattered. (Several McGoff sons become violent toughs, too, by the way.) The family's saga ends with one of Rachel's sons gruesomely raping a white radical woman who has befriended him at a Thanksgiving party—a story with eerily familiar echoes to those who've read Richard Wright's *Native Son*. Charles Murray, author of the less optimistically titled *Losing Ground*, will find in the Twymons grim confirmation of his theory that poor blacks have done worse in the very period when the larger society was massively turning its attention to their problems.

Murray's explanation as to *why* blacks fell further behind, however, does not hold up very well here because it's too specific. He cites increased welfare benefits and the abolition of the rule against having a man in the house as causing an explosion in welfare dependency, but Rachel Twymon goes on welfare back in 1962, and never seems to have a man around the house anyway. (Speaking of conservative theories, Roger Starr would say *Common Ground* proves his about liberal city governments' being afraid to impose values on the ghettos—but if that's why the ghettos of New York and Boston are so bad, then why are the ghettos of Richard Daley's Chicago and Frank Rizzo's Philadelphia even worse?) Why, then, does life in the ghettos seem to be getting more miserable with time? What can we do about it?

Though it doesn't directly address these questions, *Common Ground* is extremely valuable for lending them urgency, and it deserves to be combed for clues. It shows more vividly than anything I've read lately how horrible life in the ghettos really is. The low point, by far, of a book full of depressing incidents, is the moment when Rachel Twymon, distraught because her two teenage daughters have left home to live with their boyfriends, finds out her son Freddie is being sought on rape charges. Sometimes it seems that the larger society has just tuned out the ghettos, preoccupied instead with preserving weapons systems and Social Security COLAs. To me, ideas like enterprise zones on the right and job training on the left, while good, often have the aspect of providing people with an easy out—a way to think, "Oh, this is all we have to do and everything will be fine; now let's think about something else." The ghettos are worse than we think, and only a real, sustained passion will lead the outside world to find out what they're like, as Lukas has done, and figure out what to do next. ■

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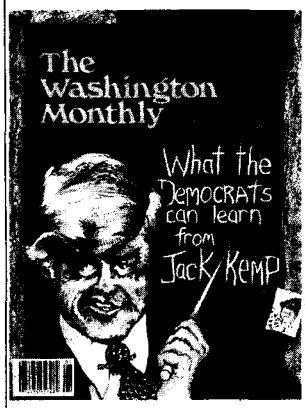

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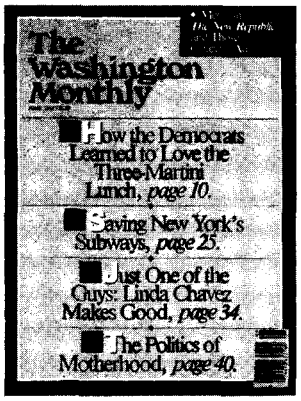

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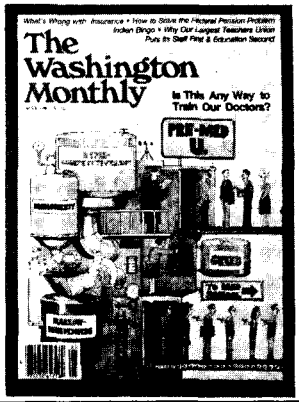

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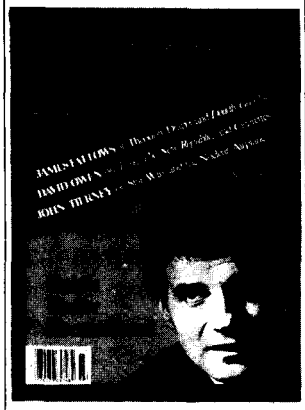

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POLITICAL BOOKNOTES

Innovation and Entrepreneurship: Practice and Principles. Peter F. Drucker. *Harper & Row, $19.95.* Cold type, word processors, chainstore marketing and the like are beginning to make publishing resemble farming—burdened by overproduction. As we currently have too much wheat, we have too many books, at least too many books just like other books. The latest effort from Peter F. Drucker, a management professor who has been writing on economics for 45 years and who contributes an insightful column to *The Wall Street Journal*, will disappoint his fans. Not that *Innovation and Entrepreneurship* is a bad book; it's just that it's been written already, several times. Drucker's "Seven Sources for Innovative Opportunity" and four "Entrepreneurial Strategies" will seem hauntingly familiar to readers of the genre. If this book were upland cotton, it would go straight into storage.

Drucker plows some well-tilled earth, then buries the reader under more rules, regulations, and aphorisms than any human being could possibly act on. One brief chapter on the principles of innovation consists of five "do's"—"A successful innovation aims at leadership"—three "don'ts"—"Don't try to innovate for the future! Innovate for the present!"—and three "conditions"—"*Two. To succeed, innovators must build on their strengths.*" (Italics from the original; in business how-to manuals it seems the more obvious the statement, the louder the drumroll.) Though originally a journalist, Drucker does not buttress his arguments with reporting, interviews, or specific case studies. Instead, all manner of historical characters are called on to back up assertions, among them Roger Bacon, William Jennings Bryan, Leonardo da Vinci, Charles Dickens, Ben Franklin, Warren G. Harding, Lillian Hellman, Nicolo Machiavelli, Mao Ze Dong, Gregor Mendel, Napoleon Bonaparte, Bertrand Russell, Madame de Sevigne, Jules Verne, and Alfred North Whitehead. Then, in an afterword, Drucker has the nerve to put down other volumes on entrepreneurship for being "anecdotal."

The book's conclusion declares that America is on the verge of a monumental "revolutionary" shift from a managerial society to an Entrepreneurial Society. Precious little indication is given of what an Entrepreneurial Society might be, although Drucker hints that government will wither away even as some unspecified vast new federal program is created to care for "redundant workers" laid off by the smokestack industries. (Not to worry, though, for he assures that "the numbers [of unemployed factory workers] are not large.") Holding back the entrepreneurial millenium is the fact that "politics is still based on the age-old assumption that whatever government does is grounded in the nature of human society and therefore 'forever.' As a result there is no political mechanism so far to slough off the old, the outworn, the no-longer-productive in government." What country is he referring to? Antipathy to government programs has dominated mainstream American politics at least since 1980 and probably stretching back a decade—Jimmy Carter, let's not forget, deregulated oil, gas, airlines, and interstate trucking.

Nobody can have new ideas all the time, and Drucker, who is 76 years old, shouldn't have jeopardized the stature of his earlier works by dashing off *Innovation and Entrepreneurship*. Meanwhile, what does it say that praise of the entrepreneurial spirit has taken over the business-book business and that even corporate CEOs now routinely condemn hierarchies and call for risk-taking excellence? Confusing speeches about innovation with the genuine article is like saying that "patriotism" has swept the country because more people think that somebody else ought to go fight in Nicaragua. Roger Smith of GM talks grandly and often about meeting the Japanese head-on with Saturn but has yet to turn a spade of earth for the factory; production may not start until 1989. But GM has sunk billions into merging with Hughes Aircraft and E.D.S., government contractors who operate strictly off the dole, steering as far clear of the free market as possible. Public praise for the small entrepreneur is a positive sign. Converting those sentiments to practice is the next challenge.

—*Gregg Easterbrook*

Secrets of State: The State Department and the Struggle over U.S. Foreign Policy. Barry Rubin. *Oxford University Press, $25.* Barry Rubin has written a diligent but disappointing study of the State Department. The book suffers from too little real experience of either the world or the State Department itself. Rubin's discussion of the Roosevelt and Truman years, for example, is decorated with quotations lifted from the memoirs of various officials of the time, but it lacks the flavor of the personalities and events. Similarly, his discussion of the Carter and

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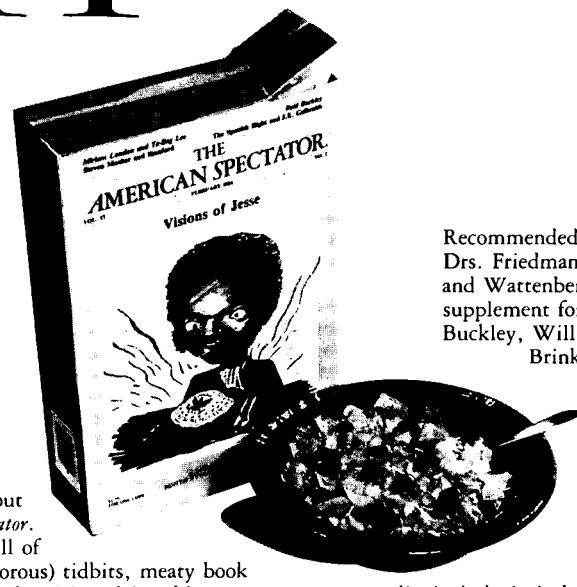

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Reagan administrations often seems culled from the files of *Time* and *Newsweek*. It is full of the sort of drama that newsmagazines love: feuds between various national security advisers and secretaries of state; power plays by bureaucrats; rivalries and intrigues that frustrate policy. But do we really need to know, for example, that after a news leak about the "Big Pine II" military exercise in Honduras, "an angry Schultz protested directly to Reagan about Clark's failure to keep him informed?"

Rubin's book is stranded awkwardly between journalism, history, and political science. It doesn't adequately meet the standards of any of these disciplines. But the real problem with the book is that it doesn't have the intellectual horsepower to digest all the quotations and newspaper clips and say something new and useful about how foreign policy is made. Instead, Rubin tends to stick to familiar themes that have been explored better by others: the friction between State and the NSC; the frustrations of career foreign service officers; the bureaucratic obstacles to coherent policy.

Few would argue with Rubin's broad theme—that the State Department is an imperfect instrument of foreign policy and that its problems are getting worse rather than better. But Rubin's insipid recommendations at the close of the book—for example: "The most important single factor is the need for competent knowledgeable people in key positions"—suggests that the State Department isn't alone in making solemn, unedifying pronouncements on foreign policy.

—*David Ignatius*

Soviet Military Power, 1985, Fourth Edition. *U.S. Department of Defense.* Every year the Reagan Pentagon issues a widely distributed, glossy volume called *Soviet Military Power*, which suggests where Soviet forces are in relation to ours, and, by inference, why we need more hardware to match them.

Although we could use a good East-West force comparison, this book misses the mark. *Soviet Military Power* fails because of distortions and irrelevancies and because it does not explain the significance of the facts and trends presented. Charts and graphs are often exaggerated and inconsistent with the text. Paradoxically, these distortions take the form of three favorite Soviet techniques—gigantomania (bigger/more is better), socialist realism (treating the future as if it were already here), and selective comparison.

In the gigantomania category, charts showing strategic missiles, space launch vehicles, and submarines are calibrated by height or length, characteristics that bear little relationship to system performance. Nevertheless, one is repeatedly left with the Freudian impression that somehow their systems are always bigger than ours. This presumably leads to missile envy and to MX acquisition.

Most foolish is the book's treatment of the new Typhoon class Soviet ballistic missile submarine, which is described as the world's largest, and one-third larger than our latest, the Ohio class Trident boat. You must look carefully at the text to discover that the Ohio is actually the far more capable craft, with solid-fueled missiles rather than liquid, four more missile tubes, and at least ten MIRVs per boat. In the Typhoon case, size is a disadvantage. A larger boat needs bigger and noisier engines, thus making it easier to find and destroy.

The socialist realism tendency becomes apparent when the reader must resort to footnotes to discover that the Soviet medium and heavy space vehicles and reusable space plane, included on a chart of "Space Launch Vehicles," do not really exist. Rather, they are in the "final stages of development," in contrast to the U.S. shuttle, which has been up and flying for years. Our shuttle, by the way, appears nowhere in the book.

Most curious is the book's internally contradictory treatment of the Soviet effort to build laser weapons for strategic defense. Either the planned Soviet system "could be operational by the late 1980s" or "testing of the components of the large-scale development system could begin in the 1990s" or "initial operational deployment is not likely in this century." Which is it?

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Contradictions of this kind are unfortunate because by discrediting some of the information presented, *Soviet Military Power* raises questions about all of it. Soviet forces *are* large and capable enough without hype from the Pentagon. In short, *Soviet Military Power* tells us little about how Comrade Gorbachev's military resources actually compare with ours, or about what he could really do with them.

—*Thomas Hirschfeld*

Habits of the Heart. Robert Bellah, Richard Madsen, William Sullivan, Ann Swidler, Steven Tipton. *University of California, $16.95.* Robert Bellah and his colleagues argue that the goal of government is to serve "the public good," as James Madison said, and that government will succeed in this task only if citizens have developed a sense of personal and social responsibility. Madison knew that while checks and balances are important, they alone will not guarantee the survival of freedom: "To suppose that any form of government will secure liberty and happiness without virtue in the people is a chimerical idea."

Habits of the Heart asks whether the virtue necessary for freedom and happiness is now being developed. Here, five authors mine their knowledge of sociology, history, religion, and philosophy to explore the mores of the American middle class. The book takes its title from Alexis de Tocqueville's observation that it is the "habits of the heart," the attitudes and values of our society more than its laws, which maintain democratic institutions.

The authors find that what Americans commonly understand as freedom and happiness has changed over 200 years. Freedom, as Jefferson wrote, was the ability to be a "participator in the government of affairs," while happiness derived from the exercise of that freedom. Like "life" and "liberty," "the pursuit of happiness" was not a right to be enjoyed only occasionally but was an integral part of daily living. Today, in contrast, freedom usually means an individual's ability to pursue a happiness that he will enjoy in private.

This radical individualism disturbs the authors, who find the pursuit of private happiness has not resulted in either a happy people or a vibrant republic. They set out to show the debilitating effect of self-referential individualism and to encourage discussions that will reawaken the ideals of freedom and commitment current 200 years ago.

The authors think a positive view of freedom emerges from what they call the biblical and republican traditions. They praise John Winthrop for envisioning the "city upon the hill." For him, Puritan virtue required that he work within his community, rather than retreat, as did Roger Williams, into private purity. They honor Jefferson for recognizing a law more basic than the statutes allowing slavery: "Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just, that his justice can not sleep forever." They extol Lincoln for his use of biblical imagery to express his vision of the Union. Each of these leaders understood how to reveal transcendence in political life.

Twenty-five million adult Americans are totally illiterate. Another 35,000,000 are functionally illiterate.

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He contends that the introduction of black studies, ethnic studies, and bilingual programs have, in fact, harmed most, those whom they were designed to help—minorities. "He damns three practices he encountered while teaching: admittance of graduate students who have abysmal academic records in an effort to offer equal opportunity; the wide-spread attitude that the 3 R's do not come first in education; and the lack of 'a body of knowledge' in the education curriculum."[2]

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Habits of the Heart laments that the rich language associated with republican and biblical tradition is debased by the language of therapy. Rather than speaking a language that reaches out to others, many of the individuals the authors interviewed tie their conversations to the private individual self. In one interview, for instance, a therapist is asked whether she has any responsibility for anyone other than herself. "No," she replies. "What about children?" "I—I would say I have a legal responsibility for them." In fact, the emergence of this private individual was envisioned by de Tocqueville when he feared that Americans would one day come to have no connections with either their ancestors or their descendants.

A sense of isolation permeates even those institutions such as religion and politics, which are usually associated with creating a sense of the common good. Many of the people interviewed confessed that religion helps them discover their true selves. Church morality offers alleviation of private pain, not the courage to address injustice in the community. Politics becomes a tool to achieve special desires—favorable zoning, higher salaries for teachers, or tax breaks for businesses. Both liberals and conservatives speak as though politics can be measured by a calculus of private freedom, the main difference being that liberals believe that government can best supply the means and conservatives do not.

The purpose of the book, then, is to "transform the inner moral debate, often shared with intimates, into public discourse." The authors hope that demonstrating the emptiness in people's lives will spur them to create a social transformation that will finally fulfill the promise of the civil rights movement and create a just society.

Unfortunately, in drawing a portrait of people inarticulate about their commitment to the public good, the authors fail to show how participation in the public realm can be a source of happiness. The movement they hope for will not emerge from the portraits of unfulfilled lives or the shame that injustice is still pervasive. Instead, it will be created by people who are willing to risk their present private comfort because they are excited by the promise of a greater public future.

—*Kathleen Kennedy Townsend*

The Power Structure of American Business

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The Button—The Pentagon's Command and Control System—Does It Work? Daniel Ford. *Simon and Schuster, $16.95.*
Strategic Command and Control, Redefining the Nuclear Threat. Bruce Blair. *Brookings, $32.95.* An actual button, of course, does not exist. There is no single switch in the White House that allows a president to send a jolt of electricity 3,000 miles cross-country, instantly launching Minutemen from the missile fields of the Great Plains. In reality, control of U.S. nuclear forces is a complicated affair involving, among other things, a book of war plans called "the football," multi-digit codes, two-man silo crews, a command post under a mountain, and planes towing mile-long radio antennas.

This system may in fact be quite tenuous. A mere handful of Soviet warheads—perhaps as few as

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250—might effectively destroy U.S. nuclear command and control. Now that controversy over the so-called "window of vulnerability" of American ICBMs has abated, defense experts are focusing increasingly on command structure as the real Achilles heel of strategic forces. Zbigniew Brzezinski, for instance, cites communications fragility when arguing that a limited "Star Wars" missile defense may be a good thing.

As happens with any hot policy topic, there is now a rush to create a literature. A series of command and control studies has appeared in recent months, with these two the latest in the genre. Both are thorough and illuminating. They manage to make similar points while being wildly divergent in tone.

Bruce Blair's *Strategic Command and Control* is unmistakably the product of a think-tank fellow. In other words, it tries to convey concern without being alarmist and is very difficult to read. Examining how command and control has evolved since the mid-sixties, Blair shows how technical constraints and sheer bureaucratic indifference have made the U.S. more and more dependent on airborne communications systems—which are vulnerable to many sorts of attack. This weakness virtually dictates that the U.S. have a quick-release, launch-under-attack philosophy of nuclear war, Blair concludes.

Reagan initiatives in this area are all well and good, but won't make that much difference, according to Blair. He has a number of intriguing recommendations, such as the creation of undersea command posts for the president and (my favorite) research into the use of railroad tracks for extremely low-frequency submarine communications.

Daniel Ford's *The Button* on the other hand, is an activist's book, that is, lively and scary. He also examines in detail weak spots in the U.S. communications system, but in a linear fashion more understandable to lay readers and with anecdotes such as this: On a trip to the Strategic Air Command command post, Ford saw a general pick up a direct phone to the White House and fail to raise so much as an operator.

Ford also claims the Pentagon has a quick-release, use-them-or-lose-them attitude toward its nuclear weapons, in particular land-based ballistic missiles. He sees a great danger in this policy—that our military planning, in a crisis, may itself become a force pushing for war.

The apparent fragility of command and control, at best, calls into question whether the doctrine of flexible response in nuclear crises is practical and at worst implies that the nuclear balance is much more unstable than we realize.

—Peter Grier

The Limits of Victory: The Ratification of the Panama Canal Treaties. George D. Moffett III. *Cornell University Press, $24.95.* George D. Moffett III, an historian, served as an assistant to Hamilton Jordan on the White House staff from 1978 to 1981. In this useful book he analyzes the Carter administration's 1977 struggle to win ratification of the Panama Canal treaties. He argues that the fight contributed to both the rise of the New Right and the dawn of the Reagan era.

The Panama Canal had come to be regarded as an irritant in our relations with Latin America; both Republican and Democratic presidents had negotiated with Panama to write a new treaty. It fell to Jimmy Carter to complete the negotiations in his first year in office and then to seek Senate ratification. Another president might have seen this for the no-win situation it was and made either a token effort or a backroom deal. Carter decided to make it the occasion to unveil a new foreign policy for America after Vietnam.

That policy, according to Moffett, emerged from a curious alliance of Democratic liberals and multinational corporate executives, meeting in places like the Trilateral Commission. They believed that after detente the Soviet Union was less important to U.S. interests than

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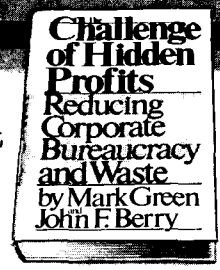

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the newly assertive countries of the Third World. Carter took office as an adherent to this view, ignoring the military and ideological issues of U.S.-Soviet relations. The Canal treaties would both introduce the new American policy and lay the groundwork for future shifts.

However, as Moffett demonstrates, the "Canal give-away" met with vigorous opposition. Public discontent with the decline of U.S. hegemony, to which the new policy was a response, was focused on the Canal by Ronald Reagan in the 1976 campaign, when he attacked a Kissinger agreement that laid the basis for Carter's treaties. Reagan's position—"We built it, we paid for it, it's ours"—touched a nerve in the public. A year later, a group of then-unknown young conservatives—Richard Viguerie, Kevin Phillips, Paul Weyrich, and Terry Dolan, among others—capitalized on that public reaction to unify the scattered forces of a new conservatism. On the other side, few interest groups were willing to fight for the treaties. Carter won the battle for what Moffett calls his "policy without a constituency," but the cost was high. He had no political capital left for future battles, such as the one over SALT II, and he had created the enemy that would destroy him, as the conservative opposition became the foundation of the New Right.

Moffett sees Carter as a victim of bad timing and poor public relations. Portrayed in this story, however, is a president without such leadership qualities as: eloquence, passion, conviction, clarity of thought and purpose, or even the basic political sense of when a battle is not worth waging. Carter was never quite able to explain the new policy or his vision—if he had one—of the American role in the world.

—Gordon Rayfield

International Security Yearbook 1984/1985. Barry M. Blechman, Edward Luttwak, eds. *Georgetown University Center for Strategic and International Studies, $33.* Written for the non-expert, this collection of nine essays, edited by CSIS senior fellows Barry Blechman and Edward Luttwak, provides a lucid account of the year's international political and military events. Each of the contributors confirms the editors' central thesis that the two-superpower order is disintegrating.

The Middle East is a case in point. William Quandt writes that the United States and Soviet Union observed key developments from the sidelines during 1984. Despite American efforts to depict Libya's Muammar Qadhafi as a murderous outlaw, the moderate Moroccan government entered into a federation with Libya. In early 1984, Jordan's King Hussein facilitated American efforts to bring about Arab-Israeli negotiations. But before the year was out, he abruptly withdrew his request for American arms and denounced American policy as excessively pro-Israel. Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak was no more cooperative. In order to restore Egypt's good name among its Arab neighbors, Mubarak kept a polite distance from U.S. peace talk proposals and cooled relations with Israel.

Moderate and conservative Arab states, meanwhile, remained deeply suspicious of Moscow's close relations with the radical regimes in Syria and Libya. Qadhafi's designs on Sudan and Chad, two nations traditionally under Egyptian protection, have not endeared him to the Mubarak government. Likewise, Jordan and Saudi Arabia are antagonistic toward Syria's President Hafez al-Assad. Thus, the Soviet Union has forfeited credibility with the three most powerful Arab states.

According to Quandt, it is the rising tide of Islamic fundamentalism that has neutralized Moscow and Washington. When the Soviet Union supplies weapons to a fanatic like Qadhafi, mainstream Arab leaders regard this as subversion. On the other hand, it is the growing influence of religious extremists inside their own borders that compels moderate Arab leaders to charge that Washington is biased in favor of Israel.

In addition to the Middle East, the *Yearbook* surveys Asia, Africa, and Latin America, as well as the NATO and Warsaw Pact alliances. In each region the pattern is the same: smaller nations asserting their independence from the superpowers.

—John M. Flanagin

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